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# VILLAGE LECTURES,

ILLUSTRATING IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE

THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN:

AND ARRANGED,

IN THE FORM OF ADDRESSES,

FOR

FAMILY AND PAROCHIAL READING

---

BY

THE REV. J. D. PARMETER, B.A.

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“ O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all.”—PSALM civ. 24.

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## P R E F A C E.

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A LONG or elaborate Preface would ill accord with the unpretending character of the present little volume. I should, however, deem it unbecoming in me, to offer even so humble a production to its readers, without submitting to them the causes which induced its publication.

It has been matter of regret to many, that whilst the religious press teems with works of a superior order of writing, for the use of families, it has been deficient in the supply of those of a more simple and less elevated character.

The want of some publication between the depth of a doctrinal discourse, and the insufficiency of a moral essay, is generally acknowledged and expressed.

It has been suggested to me by some friends, upon whose judgment I strictly depend, that the features of the present little work answer to this description.

Relying upon their judgment, I venture to publish a first series of "Village Lectures," intending, should they be favourably received, to

supply other series upon a similar plan, and in illustration of passages of scriptural interest.

These addresses were composed for the purpose of public instruction, and were delivered as Evening Lectures, during the late summer months, in my parish church.

It will be seen, that in their construction I have been indebted to many pious and learned commentators. I have endeavoured as much as possible to note by inverted commas, the assistance which I have thus borrowed. If in the change of terms, to which in the simplicity of my plan I have been obliged occasionally to resort, or in any inadvertence I should seem to have laid claim to originality, I beg to state, that such an assumption has been furthest from my wishes; and that upon the adaptation of the comments of others, rather than upon any ingenuity in my own, I ground the usefulness of this small production.

It only remains for me to express an earnest hope, that if the wonders of the Creation unfolded in these pages, should happily win and interest the mind, the more solemn truths suggested by its contemplation, may at the same time effectually touch and elevate the heart !

J. D. P.

*Alderford, Norfolk.*



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duced by these means, to think more and more of eternity ; and may the salvation of our immortal souls become the first, the leading object of our lives ! If I be in earnest on my part, and you, my Christian friends, bring with you teachable spirits—souls athirst for divine things, much good may be done by this simple plan of instruction ; and an hour or two passed in the hearing or perusal of these pages, may be rightly—and, through God's blessing, profitably employed !

It will not be uninteresting, before we enter upon the main subject of these Lectures, to take a brief view of the propagation of the Bible in our native country.

The Bible, you already know, is the only source from which we can derive instruction concerning the various dispensations of God to mankind, and the duties required of man by his Creator. It is divided into two parts—the Old and New Testaments ; the *Old* being called by St. Paul, the dispensation of Moses ;

and the *New*, the dispensation of Jesus Christ.

We know not precisely when there first appeared a translation of any portion of the Bible into our own language. The earliest of which we have any account, is a translation of the Psalms in the year 706—that is, 1125 years ago !

During the reign of Richard II., an attempt was made to prevent any persons from reading the Bible in the English tongue. The duke of Lancaster (an uncle of the king's) put a stop to this grievous restraint ; but not more than eighteen years afterwards, it was again decreed, that the Scriptures should not be read by any one in English. This unjust decree paved the way for great and continued persecutions. Many persons were severely punished, and many actually lost their lives for persisting in reading the Holy Bible !

In the reign of Henry VIII. permission was granted to the people to read

the Scriptures at their pleasure ; and all the clergy were commanded to place a copy of the Bible in each of their several churches in a public spot, in order that those who wished, might enter and read from it. Great numbers of people flocked to this spot, and we may picture to ourselves a Christian group of old and young assembled together, listening to the precious truths of this volume, whilst one of them read aloud for the benefit of the rest. Every one that was able, we are told, bought this book, eagerly read, or heard it read ; and such was the anxiety of many to do so, that it is upon record, that several old people learnt to read on purpose.

During the reign of the cruel Mary, this privilege of reading the Bible was again withdrawn. Fresh and severe persecutions took place. Many individuals were driven from their native country, and many underwent torturing deaths at the stake, because they boldly professed

their faith, and persisted in reading the Scriptures.

Queen Elizabeth restored to the people the liberty of reading their Bibles, and from that period up to the present time, there has been no law to forbid this just right of conscience.\*

I have been thus minute in stating these circumstances, in order to show you how it has pleased God, amidst all difficulties and oppositions, to preserve a record of his divine truths in this favoured country, and how graciously He has continued, through each succeeding age, to watch over the spiritual welfare of his people.

Happy should we esteem our lot to be, that we live in times, when every facility is afforded us for hearing and reading the word of God! Do we, my friends, sufficiently prize this privilege? Do we apply to our Bibles constantly and eagerly, for the purpose of learning our duty, and being

\* General Introduction to Mants' Bible.

taught the way of salvation? Is it a book that really interests us? Would we give up any temporal indulgence, rather than part with the comfort of reading or hearing its great truths? Let us call to mind, that many of our forefathers actually suffered death in flames, rather than relinquish this Christian privilege.

What account, then, shall we be able to render to God—what excuse shall we possibly be able to offer, if we, who are not only permitted, but exhorted and encouraged to the study of the Bible, neglect it? It is in vain to trifle in a matter so very important. Depend upon it, those who take little or no delight in studying God's holy word, have not their minds earnestly set upon their soul's good. "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also;" and if any soul be athirst for the living waters of eternal life, it will gratefully, it will deeply drink at that pure fountain of knowledge—the Holy Bible.



Let us be careful that we ourselves are not included in that class of lukewarm Christians, who, conscious that all opposition to the study of the Bible is removed, feel no joy at the circumstance ; but taking things for granted in a general, careless sort of way, go on satisfying their consciences for their indifference, by various ignorant, though plausible excuses.

Let me here put a very simple argument. Suppose we were bodily ill, and in danger of losing our lives. Suppose some kind person were to publish a good book, which every one might understand, and in which we might easily learn to cure our disorder : should we not eagerly seek to read it ? And further, if, in order to preserve us in health, and rescue us from danger, we were told that it was necessary to peruse this book every day, should we not immediately purchase it—place it in our houses, and make it the object of our daily care and study ? Assuredly we should ; and truly thankful

would every reflecting person be, for having such a safeguard against sickness and danger, within his reach.

Now you will all allow, that the soul is far more precious than the body. The body perishes after a few brief years, and returns to its kindred dust. The soul survives the body, and lives for ever and ever! Remember, however, its future happiness or misery materially depends upon ourselves. Here then is the meaning of my argument. We all of us may be virtually said to be spiritually ill; all of us to possess our souls in danger. As in the case of a cure for the body, so is it with respect to the soul. A remedy must be sought and found, or the soul must languish in disease, and finally perish. Now the Holy Bible, my friends, is that identical good book, wherein that remedy is contained, and God is that gracious Being who places it in our hands. It is He who declares that its pages will supply us with a cure, and it



is He who tells us that it is necessary to apply to them daily, to preserve our souls in health. What then shall we say? Shall we be anxious about a book that merely teaches us to preserve our bodies, and yet continue negligent of that precious volume which will help us to save our souls alive? Let us not plead guilty to a charge so foolish. Rather let us obey our blessed Saviour's direction, and "search the Scriptures daily." Let us apply to them for reproof and correction, for comfort and instruction, for hope and salvation. And let us ever, my brethren, offer up our prayers to God, that He will bless our search to the edification and health of our souls. Then will the Holy Bible, instead of being a book to which we refer with reluctance, or at least with indifference, become to us a relic of inestimable worth—a pearl of great price. Then will its histories interest our fancies—then will its gracious promises cheer our spirits—and then will

its rich offers of free mercy and love, melt our hearts into grateful emotions, and elevate our minds to the Lord our Saviour, and to the seeking of his eternal kingdom.

I have been led into these few remarks in order to win your regard and attention to the Bible, before we enter upon a perusal of its pages.

We will now proceed to read and examine into those passages in the book of Genesis, which contain the account of the creation of the world—the formation of man out of the dust of the ground—the fall of our first parents from their original state of innocence, together with various other interesting and instructive incidents recorded therein.

The book of Genesis was written by Moses. There can be no doubt, that in writing it, he was inspired by God. It was impossible for Moses to give an account of the creation of the world, inasmuch, as during the first five days of the

world, man was not formed, and consequently could not relate as an eye-witness the particulars of those days. All the events that took place after the formation of Adam, were handed down from father to son, and so on till the time of Moses. There were seven persons by whom these traditions were preserved, viz. : Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram the father of Moses. This book embraces a period of 2,369 years, beginning with the history of the creation of the world, and ending with the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt.

I will now go on to read portions from the 1st chapter of Genesis, making such remarks while I proceed, as the subject-matter suggests.

“ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

“ And the earth was without form and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

“ And God said, Let there be light ; and there was light.

“ And God saw the light, that it was good : and God divided the light from the darkness.

“ And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”\*

What matter of reflection is here offered to our minds ! What powerful emotions of wonder and awe are excited !

Up to the moment of this beginning, there was no world ; all was one confused mass of darkness. It pleased the Almighty, however, to change the order of things—He conceived the wonderful plan of creation. Out of that vast heap of darkness and matter which lay beneath Him, He purposed to make a world of lands, and seas, and skies—of trees, and herbs, and flowers ! and this was to be accomplished in a few brief hours. We

\* Genesis v. 1—5.



are told "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." By the "Spirit of God" is meant the Holy Ghost—the third person in the blessed Trinity.\* The expression, "moved upon the face of the waters," means that the Spirit (as it were) hovered and brooded over the confused heap, till it imparted to it life and motion. It is impossible to conceive the awful and sublime grandeur of that moment! Hitherto this huge mass of materials had lain still, dark and inert. On a sudden, the Divine Spirit hovers over it, and instantaneously it breaks up into a thousand fragments; vast portions of earth and rock, hereafter to become countries, or plains, or mountains, convulsively heave amidst a boundless expanse of gushing waters. All is yet utter darkness! To the awful roar of this moment, the roll of thunder is but as a hushed whisper, and the earthquakes which now occasionally swallow up our cities and plains, are

\* Dr. Wells.

but the overthrow of an ant-hill as compared with the stupendous stir and commotion of that measureless chaos! "And God said, Let there be light." "When we read the words '*He said,*' in this or other accounts of the actions of the Almighty, we are always to understand them as meaning '*He willed,*' that is, '*He determined;*'"\* "for such is the power of God, that with Him to determine is to perform."† We are told in this verse, that God commanded that there might be light. We are not, however, to suppose that the sun and stars were then produced. "A common brightness, by which to distinguish the time, and remedy the confused darkness, was the design and effect of that mandate."‡

"And God said, Let there be light." A pause of a few moments of darkness may be supposed to have succeeded, and then, in one instant, a flood of bright

\* Bishop Patrick.

† Bishop Pearson.

‡ Bishop Patrick.

universal light poured itself over this wonderful scene of moving waters, and penetrated to every part of the boundless expanse ! “ And God saw the light that it was good ;” that is, He approved it as being agreeable to his purpose ; since He foreknew that this light would prove a blessing to the world which He was about to form, and therefore, like a benignant Being, He rejoiced in it.

“ And God divided the light from the darkness ;” which means, that “ He so separated them, that they might succeed each other in turns.” \*

“ And God called the light *day*, and the darkness He called night ; and the evening and the morning were the first day.”

“ The evening as here mentioned means one whole course of darkness, and the morning a succession of light.” Thus ended the first day of the creation. God probably divided the time of his glorious

\* Bishop Patrick.

work into six days, in order that his creatures might afterwards reflect upon each of its wonders separately. It also served to prepare the way for a seventh day—a day of rest, of which we shall hereafter have occasion to speak. If we, at the close of each succeeding day, were to reflect upon these wonders, would it not force upon our minds salutary impressions of the great power and wisdom of God, who, by the magic of his word, wrought such transcendent changes? Let it be remembered, that the power and wisdom of God are still as visibly displayed in the *preservation* as they were in the creation of this world. It is to that glorious Being we owe every thing we see, or possess, or enjoy. It is to that glorious Being we are to look up for continued protection and support; and when we fix our thoughts upon the work of this wonderful day, we shall be led involuntarily to elevate our hearts to God, and exclaim, “O Lord, how mani-



fold are thy works ; in wisdom hast thou made them all."\*

The power of God as displayed in this interesting account, ought also to teach us how entirely we are the creatures of his will and pleasure. That if God was able in one day to effect such surpassing wonders by the simple exercise of his will, so has He similar power on this very day to accomplish any thing equally astonishing ! When we walk forth and behold the charms of nature—when the sunshine warms and gladdens our spirits—when the view of fields spread out with coming plenty cheers our hearts, we all experience in different ways, or in different degrees, certain secret emotions of pleasure—we feel that we are surrounded by many comforts, and the conviction yields us enjoyment. If, then, we *do* experience such pleasurable sensations, and if at the same time we feel conscious that the will of God could de-

\* Psalm civ. 24.

prive us of them in one moment, ought we not *so* to live in this present life, as to be prepared for any sudden display of his power ; and in the meanwhile to be unboundedly grateful to Him, whilst He continues to us the enjoyments of such blessings ? We are too apt to forget the Creator, when we view the creature. We look upon a beautiful grove of trees, for instance ; we perhaps admire their picturesque appearance : we praise the taste or forethought of the proprietor ; we approve the skill of the planter—but we never, probably, bestow a thought further than this. We do not extend our reflections beyond this point, and think upon their original formation. We dwell upon the ingenuity of man ; but are too prone to overlook the power of God. We prize the noble oak of the forest, we admire the skill of man in adapting its timbers to shipping, and other ingenious contrivances ; but we forget the surpassing and almighty wisdom of that adora-

ble Being, who, from a small despised acorn, has caused this very tree to spring and expand into its full majesty of sylvan beauty!

But, my brethren, in reading the account of the first day of the creation, are there not still more deep, more serious, more spiritual lessons to be obtained?

Our minds in their natural unregenerate state, may be aptly compared with that confused mass of waters, before the Holy Spirit of God moved upon their surface. The outward frame-work is indeed in existence, but that spiritual ray which "lightens the whole body" has not yet beamed upon the soul. Upon this state of mental darkness and ignorance, God may be supposed to look down from heaven. He says to the unconverted soul, "Let there be light," and forthwith the soul which was before dead, becomes alive to divine things. Desires begin to spring up in the soul after God and his glory. The soul is, as it were, in motion,

and ready to receive those salutary impressions which God, in his tender concern, vouchsafes to impart. When the Spirit of the Almighty first moved upon the dark waters, it was for the purpose of creating the universe, and when his Holy Spirit moves upon our unawakened souls, it is that they may become living souls; that they may no longer remain insensible and dull, but that they may be roused to serve God, and be fitted for the great end for which they were designed.

And here let me put a question.--- Have we not experienced sometimes in ourselves, and observed in others, something of this operation of the quickening Spirit? Have there not been periods when we have been indifferent to religious matters, and inactive in the care of our souls? And have not doubts crossed our minds at this time that all is not right—that we are trifling with our spiritual condition? It is then that God is invisibly warning our hearts from spiritual



dangers, and calling them from ignorance to knowledge—from the powers of darkness to the mansions of light. Let us, then, lay hold of this blessed help, whilst God offers it to us. Let us not wilfully or foolishly turn from the light, and thus lose the benefit of its holy beams upon our souls. Rather let us prize it. Let us pray to God to give us more of this sacred light, that we may become the creatures of his redeeming love. It will hereafter appear by what means, and upon what conditions, we are to accept this light, so as to secure the salvation of our souls. I would now only remark, that this craving after divine things is the first step towards a turning to God in heart and soul—it is the first day, as it were, of our spiritual creation: and, my brethren, take heed that you despise not nor resist this opening conviction upon your hearts. If God has begun a gracious work within you, let it be your earnest desire and study to turn it to your soul's

good. Remember, it rests with ourselves whether we will accept this light, or heedlessly refuse it. Our Lord says expressly, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."\*

At the end of the first day of the creation, we find God contemplating the works of his power with holy complacency. We are told that "God saw the light, *that it was good.*" Let it be our earnest endeavour, that God may look down with the same benignant complacency, when He condescends to survey the effects of his light upon our souls; let the dawning of his mercy be hailed by us with thankfulness and joy; let us no longer walk in a vain shadow, but let us turn to the Lord our Saviour, and "He will have mercy upon us, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon us!" He will be a lantern to guide our wan-

\* John iii. 19.

dering steps into the way of peace, and we shall become the children of light and the objects of his providential care!

We have been considering one of the most wonderful displays of God's power. We have seen Him out of a dark substance creating light and moving objects. Up to the time, however, of the account, so far as we have read, nothing that beautifies this world was yet formed. But though we have not advanced further in reading this interesting recital, yet, *we* as Christians may look a little beyond this period in a spiritual point of view. Passing over the days of the creation and other circumstances that subsequently occurred, let us bring our thoughts to that blessed moment, when the light of the Gospel first dawned upon the darkness of a guilty world. Our Saviour's birth shed upon us this holy light. He beheld the world lying in ignorance, confusion and idolatry; He knew that fallen man could not be reconciled to God nor reach

heaven, unless He descended upon earth, and gave himself a sacrifice for our sakes. As soon, therefore, as the fulness of time was come, He left the bosom of his Father, took upon Him the lowly form of man, and submitted to the cruel-torturing death of the cross, that we, through his blood, might be saved : all this was done for our salvation. But for this great sacrifice, each of us must have experienced the curse which God pronounced, when our first parents were driven from Paradise. And O my friends ! what an instance of love and compassion is herein displayed ! Unworthy as we are—provoking God as we do by word and deed continually, He still pities us, as a tender father pities his erring children. He does more than compassionate us—He plans a way for our escape. We are none of us, it is to be hoped, ignorant of the gracious plan which he has provided for our salvation. It rests with ourselves, in humble dependance upon God's assisting Spirit,



to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile us unto his Father in heaven; our Saviour "came into the world, that all that would believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let us seriously lay these great truths to our hearts—let us think upon them *well* and *often*. Let not the cares, or business, or pleasures of this transitory life drive from our minds the following important considerations: — That we have each of us an immortal soul to save; that God has provided a plan for our doing so, if we will but avail ourselves of it; and that He requires of us works of virtue and holiness, to show our obedience to Him, and our faith in his Son Jesus Christ.

This world will soon pass away, and we must all, sooner or later, return to the dust from whence we are formed. Of what then will it avail us, that we were richer or happier in this life than

others, if the care of our immortal souls has not been our first consideration? "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"\*

Alas! my brethren, it will be worse than folly—it will be our soul's destruction! Whilst then we read of God's great works, as displayed in the history we have now been considering, let us turn our eyes to Him as a God of omnipotent power; let us bear in mind that He sees and registers all we think and say and do. "God is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways."† Let the knowledge of this teach us, to be always striving to please Him, in the way which He has appointed. Let the care of our souls be our first consideration. Let us address our earnest supplication to God, that He will vouchsafe to assist us in the good work; and above all things let us not put off our religious designs. Rather let us begin this day—let us con-

\* Mark viii. 38.

† Psalm cxxxix. 2.

sider all other days, during which perhaps we have neglected these thoughts, as days of idleness and sloth. If we have not already been touched with the importance of vital religion, let our hearts be touched with a due sense of it now. Let us waste no more time in spiritual sleep or indifference.

“Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.”\*

“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon him!”†

\* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

† Isaiah lv. 6, 7.

## LECTURE II.

IN my last lecture I only advanced as far as the end of the first day of the creation. We will now, therefore, resume the subject where we left off, and begin at the 6th verse of the same chapter.

“ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament : and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.” \*

\* Genesis i. 6, 7, 8.

Great and wonderful as this fresh display of God's power is, there is nothing in it to call forth any particular observation. It may at first seem that little was comparatively effected on this second day ; but when we reflect for a moment, there is much to excite our admiration. It must have been a glorious sight, when the vast waters rolling upwards and separating by the word of God, first gave room for that clear airy space, which is called the firmament. Beautifully and aptly do the words of the holy David in the 104th Psalm describe this grand operation : " O Lord my God, thou art become exceeding glorious ; thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou deckest thyself with light, as it were with a garment, and *spreadest out the heavens like a curtain !*"

" And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear : and it was so. And God called the dry land



earth ; and the gathering together of the waters called He seas : and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, (whose seed is in itself,) upon the earth : and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind : and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.” \*

We now find the work of creation rapidly advancing. That huge mass which had lain shapeless and dark only two days before, is now divided into heaven and earth ! The waters have subsided into seas and rivers, their appointed channels ; and by the power of God’s word, the dark surface of the earth has become clothed with fresh verdure, tufted with swelling groves, and blushing with gay-

\* Genesis i. 9—13.

est flowers. All the beauties of vegetation, from the loftiest cedar of the forest, to the humblest flower of the valley—all that yields food for man, and fodder for cattle, have burst forth into a countless variety of herbs and shrubs and trees, decking the earth with loveliness and throwing up purest perfumes of incense to their great Creator. Well may we imagine God surveying from heaven, this matchless scene of peace and beauty, with holy complacency. Well may we comprehend the true force of that expression with which the account of this day's work concludes, "And God saw that it was good."—"The expression 'whose seed is in itself,' means, that each plant should have a seed within itself, which should at its proper season fall into or upon the earth, and produce plants of a similar kind;"\* thus securing a perpetual succession of each species, and at the same time affording a fresh

\* Dr. Wells.

display of God's infinite forethought and goodness.

“ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.”\*

As the glorious work of creation advances towards perfection, the commands of God become more definite, and the great outline is gradually filled up. Thus,

\* Genesis i. 14—19.

out of that general light produced on the first day of the creation, we find different bodies of light are now formed, and to each is assigned its proper use or station. It would be an endless task to enumerate the varied blessings which the creation of these luminaries, more especially that of the glorious sun, diffuses throughout the world. The return of seasons, and the divisions of time, were effected by the completion of this portion of the creation. Each succeeding day have we cause to adore the goodness and wisdom of Him, who made the sun to rule the day, and the moon to govern the night. In the succession of day and night, how wisely and kindly has God attended to the wants and comforts of his living creatures—“Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening!”\*

The necessity of sleep and cessation from toil, are alike essential to every living being; and most beautifully is this

\* Psalm civ. 23.



necessity provided for! When the inhabitants of the earth become wearied with the cares and activities of the past day, God spreads forth the sable mantle of night, and gathers all nature under his Almighty wings. The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air own nature's law, and by instinctive sympathy seek their resting places at the hour of night, whilst man is invited by every outward inducement to partake of quiet and repose. As the tender mother watches over her cradled infant, and hushes its apartment from all disturbing sounds, so does our Almighty father hush the earth into stillness, spread a soothing dimness over the universe, and seals the eyes of his creatures in peaceful and refreshing slumbers. How ought the return of each night to raise our hearts in pious gratitude to Him, who thus tenderly careth for us! How can we behold the shades of evening descending and wrapping the world in darkness, without lifting up our



souls in grateful adoration to that glorious Being, by whose invisible power this salutary, this wonderful change is produced? And again; when refreshed by slumber, man rises to his duties and employments, how does the influence of the glorious sun spontaneously revive and cheer his spirits! All nature bursts forth in universal praises at his approach. Birds and beasts, and every creature that has breath, send forth their tribute of praise and thanksgiving. And shall man—favoured man—for whom chiefly these mercies were sent, remain dull and silent when all the creation rejoices?

Cold and senseless must that person be, whose heart is not touched with grateful emotions, when he is thus forcibly reminded of the care and protection which God bestows. Let us, my friends, at the close and at the beginning of each day, never fail to bow ourselves before the throne of God in gratitude for past mercies, and in humble supplication for a

continuance of them. Whilst we commit our bodies to repose, let us raise our souls in thankfulness to Him, whose eyes “never slumber nor sleep.” And again ; when we rise in the morning, let our first duty be, to thank God for the protection He has afforded us during the night past, and to seek his blessing upon our undertakings throughout the coming day. Thus shall we keep up a due sense of our dependance upon God, and at the same time be reminded of the comfort, as well as salutary restraint of his Almighty, his omniscient presence.

“ And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind : and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, say-

ing, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind : and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind : and God saw that it was good.\*

At length the heaven, and earth, and waters, are peopled with their respective tenants. *Much* is completed, but the *greatest* work of all is still to be effected.

What a glorious sight of moving wonders must the universe at this moment have presented ! Let us pause awhile before we enter upon that final and important work of God, the creation of man.

We have seen much to excite our ad-

\* Genesis i. 20—25.

miriation and gratitude in the account we have just read. Our minds are lost in speechless surprise at the variety of images, and immensity of wonders presented to our imaginations.

But whilst we wonder at the great power and miraculous quickness, by which these stupendous and elaborate works have been performed, we must also admire the excellent order and method with which God pursued his great work. And does not this serve to teach us a lesson, when *we* engage in any undertaking, which our respective stations in life call upon us to perform? No doubt the blessing of God is first and foremost to be sought, before we undertake any employment; and that undertaking upon which we dare not call down God's blessing, or neglect to do it, is not likely either to prosper or redound to his glory. There is, however, a certain care and forethought to be exercised by us as rational creatures; and we may, in my opinion,

draw a useful hint from the admirable method herein displayed. The young and inconsiderate often fail in their undertakings, from a want of method. They heed not, perhaps, the advice of their elders, and fancy that this or that scheme is to be effected *at once*, without requisite forethought or trouble. They scorn to go step by step, and the consequence frequently is, that their plans fail. There is something in *order* more useful—nay, more *moral*, than people imagine. The mind takes its tone from the habits of the person, and when these are suffered to grow up without method, the mind becomes distracted, and less able to sustain itself equably, when it is called into exercise by varied or particular circumstances. The remark applies, I am quite sure, to worldly matters; and I believe I may go further, and add, to religious concerns also. God, doubtless, begins the gracious work of religion in men's hearts; but there rests much with man, as a free



agent, in properly receiving and cultivating this good gift. We must not fancy that a hasty wish to become religious—a sudden conviction of our sins, and a burning desire to render ourselves acceptable to God, are sufficient to make us at once religious characters. All these are no doubt steps towards such a desirable end; but they are only steps, be it remembered; and would *we*, my friends, conform our characters to the pure standard of the gospel, we must consent to do so gradually, and with orderly discretion. We must not let our imaginations become too heated and inflamed; and fancy that because we *feel* warmly, we have no need to *act* soberly and advisedly in religious matters.

We cannot hope to attain to the excellence and purity of truly Christian characters, without a gradual advance in holiness.

Do not suppose that in saying this, I would damp the ardour of any soul that

is athirst for divine things. Do not imagine that I would for one moment chill the hopes of the newly-awakened Christian, much less that I would recommend any thing like lukewarmness in such a glorious cause. I well know that if *we* humbly ask, "God will give the increase : " but I am anxious to caution you against the errors of a too superficial and hasty progress in religious experience. It is from this delusion that so many who receive serious impressions fall from, or dishonour their faith. The word falls upon the stony ground as described in our Saviour's parable of the sower. It produces momentary feelings of joy—it heats the fancy, but it sinks not into the heart ; and thus fails to produce its proper fruits of lasting and consistent holiness. The grain (to which the *word of God* is likened in the parable) must go through several processes before it attains perfection : and so must it be with true religion—it must assuredly be taken up in humble depend-

ance on the assisting grace of God. But whilst we gratefully acknowledge His mercy in thus calling us to holy desires, let us not lose sight of the propriety of that gradual progress in religion, which is the only safe path that guides to heaven.

Let us, my brethren, thankfully receive the word of God, and seriously meditate upon it. In the spirit of that woman, who placed the leaven in the meal till it should leaven the whole lump, let us embrace religion.

Let us not think that because strong emotions are produced in us *for a time*—that because we are induced to leave off a few bad habits, that we have attained all that is necessary, or all that vital religion comprehends. No ; let us rather strive to advance, than stand still—let us pray to God to give us grace so to go on in the good work, and so to fix religion in our hearts, as by degrees to leaven or spiritualize the whole soul. Instead of

allowing religious impressions to fall like sparks of fire upon our imaginations, scorching us and inciting us to momentary bursts of ardour and enthusiasm, let them softly descend like the flakes of snow gradually into our very hearts, melting us into emotions of grateful love, and inclining us to acts of faithful obedience.

I have been thus particular in dwelling upon this point, because there is abroad in the present day a spirit of religion, which I fear is not that pure practical religion which the Bible teaches, or of which our blessed Redeemer himself set so lovely an example. God forbid that we should judge harshly or uncharitably ; but of this I am convinced, that where the profession of religious sentiments does not induce parents to be more careful over their children's moral and spiritual welfare, and children to be more dutiful to their parents' authority—where it does not make masters kinder, and servants



and labourers more diligent—in short, where the profession of it is unaccompanied by suitable practice, it goes not one atom beyond mere profession. It is the shadow without the substance—the casket without the jewel, and will, if thus pursued, serve to deceive the heart and turn it from serving God in the way in which He has appointed. Whilst then, my friends, I would seriously and affectionately entreat you to turn your thoughts to the salvation of your souls, to make that great end the first object of your lives, let me warn you from the delusive notion of expecting to attain to religious experience *at once* ; and also of following those teachers and doctrines, which serve to inflame and bewilder the head, without converting and purifying the heart. But perhaps I have wandered too long from the immediate subject of discussion. I was anxious, however, to impress upon your minds the necessity of



cultivating religion, with an humble trust in God's help, and with that practical order and Christian humility, which the holy Gospel and its heavenly Founder so particularly direct. We will now proceed to the last and most important feature in the work of the creation.

“And God said, Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”\*

“When God, by his infinite wisdom and power, had brought his great work to its concluding period, there seemed nothing to be wanting to its glory but a creature endowed with reason, who might

\* Genesis i. 26, 27.

be able to understand the wonders of the creation, and would employ his faculties in praise of God."

Accordingly we find a pause made before this new creature is introduced. The very way in which his formation is described, prepares us for some signal display of God's creating power.

The expression, "*Let us* make man," implies not difficulty but great deliberation. "God does not say 'Let the earth bring forth men,' as He said to other living creatures, but He says 'Let *us* make,' which plainly indicates the dignity of man;"\* and that He was formed with admirable wisdom and prudence.

There has been much said and written upon the term "Let us." The most natural and simple explanation is, that in the expression "*us*" is included the three persons of the Holy Trinity, viz. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

When God says, "Let us make man

\* Bishop Patrick.

in our image, after our likeness," it does not mean in outward form ; but in those qualities of the soul which raise men so far above all living creatures in the scale of the creation. It is therefore, my friends, very essential that we should be cautious not to charge God at any time foolishly, by ascribing our failings to Him or to our nature, when in fact, and in truth, they proceed from our *abuse* of it. It is not an uncommon thing to hear persons exclaim, when they have yielded to any evil propensity, "I can't help it, 'tis my nature : " and it is equally common to hear people making excuses for their failings upon this very plea. They forget that the human nature, as the divine workmanship of God, is to be regarded in some degree as *sacred* ; for in the image of God "made He man." No doubt, since the corruption of our nature by the fall of our first parents, there is much cleaving to it that is evil and degenerate. We must lament over our

depravity, and pray to God to guard us against its debasing influence; but to lay *that* to the charge of our nature, which our own unresisted inclinations cause us to commit, is to charge God foolishly, since, notwithstanding our great degeneracy, there is still enough of the divine similitude in our minds, to enable us to distinguish good from evil; and God has expressly promised, that He will assist us in choosing the good and avoiding the evil, if we humbly pray to Him for grace. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to furnish us with a supply of this grace; and if we comply with the conditions of obtaining it, viz. earnest prayer, and at the same time strive to resist the first motions of sin in our hearts, we may be assured that there is no nature so corrupt that may not be converted—no disposition so depraved that may not be purified! God has provided a way of escape to all such as seek Him faithfully. He will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are



able. We may therefore rest satisfied that it is not our nature alone which is in fault, but ourselves likewise, if we continue to persist in following evil, and neglecting that which is good.

In the expression "in the image of God created He him," there is much implied. "God thought fit in his wisdom to make all the human race to emanate from one common parent; teaching us thereby not to pride ourselves upon our extraction as the Jews did of old ;"\* but to love one another and to be touched with those tender feelings of regard and sympathy towards each other, as members of one general-united family. As the inhabitants of the world increased, there became naturally an inequality in their stations in life. To some were assigned the loftiest situations, as kings and princes; in short, through all the gradations of society, there have been and always will be different ranks and classes amongst

\* Bishop Kidder.



mankind. This is wisely ordained both to promote the honour of God, and the good of man, who was created in His image. Although however external circumstances produce external differences, there is the same nature in all. We are all born into this world for the same great purpose—an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery. We are all to be saved by the same gracious Redeemer. We are all after death to crumble to our kindred dust; and we are all to rise from our graves and stand before the same great Judge! These considerations indeed proclaim an awful lesson. They tell the proud man not to glory, and the humble man not to despond. But, my brethren, do not misunderstand me. So long as we remain in this world, there must of necessity be different stations for us to occupy amongst our fellow-creatures. Each station has its separate duties, and we can only show our obedience to the wise decrees of God

—not by fancying that we are all equal, and restlessly seeking in consequence to level down the proper barriers of society, but by striving to do our duty contentedly in that station of life, both towards God and towards our fellow-creatures, in which it has pleased Him to place us.

When we look at human nature as it now is, there is little room for pride, and much for humility ; but if we regard these things as they actually exist, there will be no disposition to make petty distinctions. We shall look upon ourselves as the creatures of God's care, and shall be induced not to be puffed up with power and riches, or discontented with poverty and obscurity ; but so to live the life we live in the flesh, as to please God and secure his favour. The time will come when we shall all stand upon our individual merits, and if to despise those beneath us, or to slight the lawful authority of those above us, be displeasing to God now, be assured, it will stand against us on that

great day, when we shall all be reduced to the same common level, and shall be weighed in the balance, not according to any distinctions of wealth or rank which we possessed here, but according to the way in which we have done our duty, and embraced the rich offers of salvation through Jesus Christ.

“ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." \*

We have, my brethren, seen man created with signal marks of dignity, and we here see him invested by God with authority over the whole creation. Formed in the image of God, and endowed with understanding, he is placed above the rest of all created beings. The blessings of God are showered from heaven upon him, and he is, in an especial degree, the object of God's love and care. We are told, as each succeeding part of the creation was completed, that God surveyed it, and saw "that it was good." Till man was produced there is no variation of the term. As soon, however, as *he* is created and invested with such absolute authority, we find the term amplified and exalted, "And God saw that it was *very* good!"

His grand design was now accom-

\* Genesis i. 28—31.



plished, and the holy exultation of the great Jehovah causes Him to survey the glorious works of his hands with additional delight. Let us here pause for awhile, my friends, and view man and the world as it was exhibited at this moment. It is indeed a scene of peace, and serenity, and holiness! The very contemplation of its essential purity and loveliness, produces, even at this distant period of time, elevated feelings of admiration and praise. Our minds are instinctively raised above the grovelling things of sense, to that holy spot, of which the perfection of the world at this crisis may be said to have been the type. Man created in the image of his Maker—that is, endowed with moral, holy, and intellectual qualities—the heavens spread out like a curtain, radiant with sunshine, or gleaming with planets and stars—the earth in the full flush of verdure, teeming with trees, and herbs, and flowers, and animated by a countless



variety of animals—all conspire to form a scene of matchless perfection !

Sad is it to turn from what *then was*, to that which *now is*. If, however, we wish to extract some practical instruction from the subject we have been considering, we must view man in his changed condition. I shall, in the course of a future lecture, detail the circumstances attending his fall from this state of glory and innocence ; but in the meanwhile let us seriously consider how we may recover the lost privileges of our fallen nature, since the melancholy change produced by that fall is entailed upon every one of us. It is impossible for us to regain that blessed state of purity *here* ; but, my friends, we may regain the favour of God, and attain to it *hereafter*. We are not to sorrow as men without hope in this particular, for a glad hope has sprung up to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fallen in the sight of God, defaced in the heavenly image, from which we were originally formed,

we are still the objects of His fatherly care and protection. It cannot be reasonably supposed, that man, even in his original perfection, was designed only for the present world. There was, no doubt, some gracious plan for his future happiness, even before he forfeited his innocence by disobedience. That plan was frustrated by the perverseness of man himself. Mark well, the great, the striking difference between God's dealings with his erring subjects, and the general dealings of man with man under provocation. When hindered in any darling scheme by the perverseness of any of our fellow-creatures, how apt are we to become provoked and irritated ! If we cherish not anger or revenge, we find it at least a difficult task to return good for evil, and frequently nourish the seeds of resentment within our bosoms more than the occasion of offence warrants. But how differently does a just and merciful God deal with fallen man ! No sooner had he forfeited

his claim to heavenly favour, than God began to provide a way for his deliverance from wrath. A gracious plan was at once designed, wisely suited to fulfil the justice of God, and at the same time to secure the restoration of man. The glorious scheme of redemption through our Saviour Jesus Christ was formed and made known to the world, though in obscure figure. "As in Adam all had died, so in Christ were all to be made alive!" And here let me remark, much as we admired the first man in all the moral beauty of his original creation, how much more is our admiration excited by the glorious perfections of the second man—the "Lord from heaven!" In outward form, indeed, the blessed Jesus was the same. He condescended to take our lowly nature, upon Him. "He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." \*

\* Isaiah liii. 2.

But, my brethren, in mind, and heart, and soul, what a superiority! All holiness, all purity, all excellence, He perfected every virtue, leaving us an example of true godliness, in order that we might follow in his steps. And then the gracious purpose for which our blessed Saviour descended upon earth—how boundless his love, how heavenly his compassion! When we think of the only Son of God leaving the bosom of his Father—when we think of his exchanging the glories of heaven for all the pains and trials of mortal life—when we think of what He endured for us men, and for our salvation,—how must our hearts thrill with gratitude for such undeserved, such generous love! Let us, then, when we meditate upon the fall of man from his state of innocence, let us earnestly seek that deliverance which God has graciously provided for us as fallen creatures. Let us strive to regain the glorious image in which we were originally made, by be-



lieving on Him whom He hath sent, and by studying to fulfil faithfully His commandments. Shall God *do so much* to reinstate us in his favour ; and shall *we* continue unmindful of his mercy, and forfeit by our indifference his gracious offers? Gratitude to God, concern for our impending danger, and regard to our future happiness, all ought to conspire to make us earnest and anxious to accept this glorious scheme of salvation. O let *us* not be supine in such an important matter. Bowed down with a sense of our own weakness, let us pray to God to afford us his promised assistance ; humbled under a conviction of our sins and unworthiness, let us apply to the Lamb of God to present us “ faultless before his Father in heaven.” In conclusion to this subject, let us call to our recollection the qualities with which God gifted us at our first creation ; and if we must in truth acknowledge that these qualities have been grievously defiled by the fall



of our first parent, let us also bear in mind that much of the advantage which we thus forfeited, is again made up to us by the assisting influence of the Holy Ghost ; and that it is our condemnation and not our excuse, if we neglect to avail ourselves of it. Let us also remember to our great and endless comfort, that though God requires of us virtuous and holy lives, to prove the sincerity of our faith in Christ, and our obedience unto Him, yet He is not "extreme to mark what is done amiss." God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should have everlasting life. He has promised to accept us for the sake, and through the merits of the blessed Jesus, if we show our faith by obedience to his will.

The limits of our time will not permit me to go further into the subject of our inquiry in the present lecture. Allow me then, my brethren, whilst I exhort you to seek the way of salvation and to walk in it with all Christian diligence

and perseverance, allow me to remind you of the glorious rewards that await the true believer. All that was forfeited by Adam's disobedience will be restored by Christ's sacrifice. We shall once more be renewed in the image of God—shall again become his favoured creatures, and instead of inhabiting a world of precarious happiness, a world of grief and temptation, we shall be welcomed into those glorious regions of heavenly joy, where we shall dwell for ever and ever a happy and redeemed people! And does not the idea of these glorious rewards excite in our hearts a fervent desire to attain them? Does not the contemplation of the glories of heaven, wean our desires from the perishable things of sense? Does not the worth of the immortal soul rise in full and urgent force before us, whilst we acknowledge the shortness and vanity of worldly things, as compared with the duration and importance of eternity? Let us be earnest

—let us not compromise, as it were, in a matter so momentous. We have each of us an immortal soul; the opportunity of saving that soul alive is afforded to every individual person who will embrace it—our blessed Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to Him in faith and contrition of heart, and the aid of the Holy Spirit is promised to all who apply for it by earnest prayer.

Let us not, then, slight these rich offers of mercy. Whatever may be our situations in life—whether we be rich or poor—whether we be learned or ignorant—whether we be old or young—whether we be in the flush of health or in the decay of sickness, let us make the care of our souls our first consideration. Let all our motives and actions have a reference to that great end. And remember, my friends, we must not only *wish* for salvation, but we must make use of the means laid down for obtaining it. We must not rest contented with feeling

warmly upon the subject, but we must be "up and doing." Whilst we strive to subdue our corrupt inclinations, we must by prayer and supplication entreat God's gracious assistance. We must lean upon Christ as our rock of defence : we must appeal to Him for mercy, and we must confidently rely upon his merits to make atonement for our transgressions.

Thus, my brethren, shall we go on our way rejoicing—thus shall we be enabled to pass through the waves of this troublesome world, until it shall please God to summon us to that sweet haven of rest, where "there will be no more sorrow, nor crying," where "every tear shall be wiped away from every eye, and the days of all mourning shall be ended !"

## LECTURE III.

My last lecture brought us to the end of the creation. For the purpose of preserving a certain order in his account, Moses omitted many particulars in the 1st chapter of Genesis, which we find recorded in the one upon which we are now about to enter. We are not, however, to imagine that any thing was left unfinished at the close of the sixth day. All was then completed, and it is only with a view of making us more fully acquainted with this interesting history, that Moses goes on to supply many particulars which he had previously left out; and to dwell with more minuteness upon some which he had only briefly related.



The opening declaration of the second chapter is a simple comment upon all that has been set forth in the verses preceding it.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them!”\*

We have already surveyed these glories of the creation at considerable length with wonder and delight; we will therefore pass on to the next verse, remarking by the way, that the expression “all the host of them,” means every thing that was created. “In the whole world” is a very common phrase among us, and the term exactly gives the force and meaning of this passage. “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,” every thing *that is in the whole world*.

In dismissing our contemplations on this subject, let us, my brethren, join in the concluding verses of that sweet hymn which the pious David raised to the great Jehovah as creator of the world: “We

\* Gen. ii. 1.

will sing unto the Lord as long as we live. We will sing praises unto our God whilst we have our being. Our meditation of Him shall be sweet: we will be glad in the Lord.”\*

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which He had made.”†

We are now presented with a subject of the utmost interest; and would that my feeble powers could so handle it, as to impress deeply upon the minds of all who hear me, the important privileges and holy enjoyments which arise, from a strict attention to the exercises of the Sabbath day.

Its divine origin is here declared; but I would remark before we enter at large upon its sacred character, that when we read “on the seventh day God ended his work,” we are not to understand that any portion of the work was carried on

\* Psalm civ. 33, 34.

† Genesis ii. 2.

during the seventh day. No, my brethren, when the grey light of that seventh morning dawned from the skies, it trembled over an earth sleeping in all its perfection of beauty and innocence.

When the glorious sun rose in his newly-created majesty on that sacred morning, it lighted up a perfect world, animated by the presence of every living creature! The passage then will be more clearly understood, if we read it thus: "And on the seventh day God HAD ended his work, which He had made."\*

I dwell the more particularly upon this explanation, because, the apparent doubtfulness of the expression may betray some (who reflect only upon the surface of things) into a mistake. I can scarcely imagine that many would be led into an error upon this point; but I once heard a person, with whom I was speaking upon the sinfulness of doing on the

\* Bishop Patrick.

Sunday morning, what could as well have been finished on the Saturday, make a reply to this effect: "That God did not finish the work of creation till the seventh day, and surely, then, there could be no great harm in his completing his trifling employment on the Sunday." In this answer there was an ingenious mixture of knowledge and ignorance, and it proves, that it *is possible* for some to wrest this passage from its original purity to favour their own convenience. At all events, the true import of it serves to remind us, that no work whatever was performed by our heavenly Father on the Sabbath day, and that if we would keep it as God himself established it, we must rest from our worldly pursuits, not according as it suits our own pleasure, but from its very earliest dawn to its final close. It may also be as well to remark here, that the "rest" spoken of in this verse does not imply any weariness in God, for Isaiah tells us in his emphatic



language, that "the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary;" but the expression is made use of, after the manner of men, in order to suit the capacity of their understanding, and merely denotes God's cessation from his great work.\*

Let us now seriously turn our attention to the nature and duties of the holy institution herein suggested to us.

The Sabbath day means a day of rest. On this day we find God ceasing from the works of his hands, and viewing the universe with holy complacency. On each return of this day, therefore, are we commanded to leave off our various employments, and to devote our thoughts, souls, and affections to that gracious God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

It wants but little argument to convince us of the absolute necessity, as well as infinite mercy of this ordination. It may truly be said to be wisely adapted to the

\* Nelson on Festivals and Fasts.

wants of both body and soul ; it is mercifully ordained for the mutual comfort of man and beast, and it ought to be passed by us invariably to the honour and praise of Almighty God.

If we look at the state of the larger portion of mankind, we shall find it to be a state of active pursuits and toilsome labour. Were it not for the return of the Sabbath, there would be little chance, to many, of resting from their labours. Many would probably still go on in the same ceaseless round of occupation, till nature became exhausted, and the mind disheartened or broken down. How kindly and wisely then has God set apart one day in the seven, when man is not only permitted, but commanded, to rest from his labours ! But, my friends, much as our temporal comforts are promoted by this day of rest, how much more are our souls benefited by enjoying this blessing ? If our perishable bodies require rest from their labours, surely our im-

mortal souls require occasional separation from worldly pursuits. We all know how much our time, and thoughts, and faculties, are engrossed by the business of this life's cares and pleasures. We all know how much our actions are guided by the fancied or real wants of the present time. If we were not, therefore, to be withdrawn forcibly, as it were, from these absorbing cares, there is much reason to fear that we should soon cease to regard the wants of the soul, and should speedily become mere creatures of the passing moment. Let us glance at the different classes of society as constituted in the world, and we shall at once perceive how essential this rest is to every condition, in a spiritual point of view.

Survey the man of wealth, and power, and worldly happiness! Suppose him endowed with right and serious views—suppose him even to carry these views with him into daily practice, still you will acknowledge, that there is much, very

much in his mode of life to tempt and ensnare the soul. The allurements of pleasure—the charms of amusement—the fictitious supplies of luxury, and the countless round of changing and varying enjoyment, (all rational in moderation, but all so difficult to keep within proper bounds,) conspire to raise religious difficulties in the rich man's path, of which those in a lower and more limited sphere dream not. The Sabbath day, however, returns, calm and holy in its appointed duties; and if the purposes for which that day was instituted are not unheeded, its sacred character raises his mind above earthly grandeur, to those holier and more substantial things, which perish not, neither fade away. As the sound of the Sabbath-bell falls upon his ear, summoning alike the rich and poor, the old and young, to the courts of the Lord's house; as the mixed throng, hastening forward to the parish church, bursts upon his view, he is reminded of that general gathering



together which will take place, when God cometh to judge the whole world in equity. Again; when he enters the same church—joins in the same service—hears the same rich offers of salvation proclaimed—the same gracious rewards held out, equally and without distinction to all true believers, he no longer sets an undue value upon any worldly advantages, but gratefully ascribing his worldly comforts to God, he prays to be so directed in his heart and conduct, that he may not misuse those blessings, to the danger of his precious soul.

To the man of business much of the same reasoning applies. He has, perhaps, during the past week, been harassed with speculations—eager in the pursuit of gain—fretted under disappointments, or puffed up by prosperity. A cessation from these ensnaring temptations suitably comes, to rouse him from a too engrossing consideration of temporal wants. On this sacred day he rests from the cares of

this life, and is led to remember, that he has an awful account to prepare against that great day of reckoning, when we shall all be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ, "to render an account of what has been done in the body, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Whilst during the past week he has been industriously striving to be "diligent in business," he is now instructed that it is impossible to do so, as the gospel requires, unless "he is also fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

The farmer has the same reason to regard this rest from his employments, as equally beneficial to his soul's health. Withdrawn for a time from the quiet, though unceasing routine of his weekly occupations, he is now invited to turn his thoughts to that field, where his heavenly treasure lies hid, and to those fresh pastures where God will lead "him forth by the side of living waters." Whilst he surveys his coming crops, he is reminded

of that great harvest, when our Saviour will gather his sheaves into his garners, separating the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the grain. Whilst he views his peaceful fields and reposing cattle, he is led by the soothing quietude of all around him, to raise his heart in grateful adoration to that Being, who "covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth ; and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of men. Who giveth fodder to the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him."\*

But let not the poor and labouring man suppose that he either requires not, or is excluded from the comforts and convenience of this day of rest. Far from it, my friends. The constant and hard labours in which the poor are daily engaged, may perhaps weary their bodies, and consequently render their minds less at leisure for religious thoughts and ex-

\* Psalm cxlvii. 8, 9.

ercises ; but when the Sabbath returns, they are released from these hindrances to spiritual contemplations. Their bodies are refreshed, and their hearts cheered by a seasonable rest ; and if they be so disposed, both time and opportunity are afforded them for refreshing their *souls* also ! They may hasten to the church and hear the glad tidings of salvation freely proclaimed to all. They may there learn with honest pride and pious gratitude, that our blessed Saviour hallowed their humble station of life, by consenting to appear in it himself, and that to the poor of this world more especially is the gospel preached. Whilst they enjoy a rest from their daily toil, they may to their comfort reflect, that this rest is but the type and shadow of that eternal rest which is promised to every true believer ; that the glorious time is hastening on, when there will be no more grief, nor care, nor toil ; when God will “ wipe away all tears from all eyes—when there will be no more



death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Thus, my brethren, will this rest from our respective pursuits affect our minds, if we consider the wise purposes for which it was ordained.

The motives for, and necessity of, observing the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, will be better discussed in our examination of the following verse.

"And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all his work, which God created and made."\*

We have just considered the spiritual comfort arising from this appointed day of rest. We are now taught that "God blessed the seventh day," that is, he ordered it to be observed as a day for praising Him and obtaining his blessings.

And do *we* really and seriously consider this, and strive to pass this sacred day in communion with our God? Do we

\* Genesis ii. 3.

resolutely shut our thoughts from worldly pleasures and cares, and centre them fixedly upon the great business of salvation? Do we make that great end the first, the absorbing object of our Sabbath-day meditations and pursuits? Do the thoughts of eternity and the salvation of our souls take for this one day at least out of the seven, the lead of all other considerations? Do we consent to give up the pursuit of worldly employments, because we know them to be unpleasing to God, and because we are persuaded that if we halt between two opinions, we must fall? To waver in any good resolution, is at all times dangerous; and be assured, that if we waver between a choice of active occupation and holy rest, between pleasure and devotion on the Sabbath day, present pleasure and temporal advantage will so far obtain the victory, as to impede our course in that even and consistent search after heaven, which can alone guide us into its blessed

portals. Again ; are we, in truth, willing to give up some personal comforts for the sake of example, and for the Christian purpose of affording to others, leisure for worship and religious exercises ? Can we consent to part with enjoyments to which the love of ease or pleasure make us cling, because, though harmless in themselves, and innocent when pursued at proper times, they nevertheless hinder the objects of this holy day, and take our minds from that important business, for which this day is set apart, by God himself ? Are we quite sure that our behaviour on this appointed day of rest, is not guided as much by custom and habit, as it is by a sense of duty, and a desire to enjoy its promised blessings ?

In each and all of these respects, are we following the opinions of our fellow-men, who err—and smooth away and modify, according to their own views and convenience ; or are we following the

directions of an Almighty God, who errs not, and who lays down a strict command in this particular?

These are important questions, and should we find ourselves doubting or faltering in our replies to them, we may be assured there is some lamentable defect in our notions upon this subject. We are halting between two opinions. We are divided between a sense of duty and a love of the world. We are making a compromise, as it were, with our souls in this important decision. We are calculating how to make our Sundays a comfortable mixture of worldly pleasures and religious observances—how to bestow just enough thought on spiritual matters, so as to lull our own consciences and secure outward respectability, without submitting to that entire devotion of our hearts and souls to God, which would interfere with our worldly comforts. But I must remind you, my brethren, that in this compromise there is both ignorance and



danger. When once we permit ourselves to make worldly pleasures and employments at all an object on a Sunday, we are not only turning our backs upon the spiritual blessings of the day—we are not only destroying the holy purposes for which it was ordained, but we are displeasing God; we are daring to set our opinions against his commands—we are making ourselves higher than our divine master, by presuming to pursue employments and taste pleasures on that sacred day, upon which God himself thought fit to rest from the excellent work of his almighty hands.

In saying this, do not suppose that I would put a check to all rational enjoyment on a Sabbath day. Do not suppose that I would recommend it to be passed in gloominess or austerity. I well know that this day affords to many the only opportunities of enjoying a necessary portion of rest and recreation; to these, then, many enjoyments are allowable;

but what I am anxious to enforce is this, that in the pleasures which we permit ourselves to take on this day, we should be particularly careful not to admit ANY that would interfere with the great and sacred objects of it. I must, however, go still further, and advise that our pleasures on a Sunday be as much confined as possible to religious pleasures—pleasures which, whilst they soothe and cheer our souls, will elevate them from temporal to spiritual desires. That this may and will be the case where religion is embraced in its genuine spirit, there can be no doubt. If we are once impressed with the full importance of it, if we once feel the worth of our souls, and a desire to secure their safety, every help and institution that serve to bring us nearer to that end, will become to us a source of enjoyment. Let me put a parallel case, drawn from a worldly consideration. It is by no means an uncommon thing to hear people exclaim, when speaking of a

child's or friend's advance in any profession or business, "We have no fear now, for he begins to take a delight in his employment." What was difficult and perhaps vexatious at first, has been removed by perseverance. His heart has been fixed upon his pursuit; earnestness has produced interest, and interest pleasure. And so is it with religion, if embraced with heart and soul: it will not only keep us stedfast in our profession, but it will open to us sources of holy enjoyments, which will repay us in a tenfold degree for any worldly pleasures which we relinquish in its attainment.

And remember, my friends, that when we read that "God blessed the seventh day," we are to bear in mind that He still continues to bless it. If on this day we are more especially charged to address our prayers to God for the supply of our wants—our praise to Him for the blessings we enjoy, we may rest assured that more especially on this day also, is He ready to hear and

welcome, and strengthen all who approach Him in singleness of heart. He permits us on this day to draw near to Him in the holy communion of religious exercises; and if we slight not the gracious privilege, He will be with and amongst us, cheering the afflicted, sustaining the wavering, and accepting the penitent.

But whilst we read "God blessed the seventh day," we also learn that "He sanctified it;" that is, He set it apart, that as each succeeding week returned, we might call to remembrance the wonders of the creation, and be led to praise that Holy Being, by whom they are and were created.

And shall God sanctify one day out of the seven, hallowing it by his own great example, and man dare to pollute it? Shall God rest from His glorious works on this day, and yet man presume to pursue his? Believe me, there is ingratitude as well as disobedience in such a course;



and I would earnestly entreat you all, collectively and individually, fairly to examine—not by men's opinions—not by the suggestions of your own hearts—but by the unerring direction of the holy Bible, whether you keep the Sabbath-day as it ought to be kept.

If we contrast the Sabbath of the present time with that holy peaceful day, when God first rested from his works, how are its features altered and defaced! Then all was innocence, freshness, and purity! The world with its countless variety of newly-created wonders laid beneath the foot of its Creator, hushed into solemn stillness, or resting in grateful adoration. Man was in a state of innocence, and God an *unoffended* God. The Jehovah is represented as surveying this scene of matchless peace and loveliness with holy pleasure, and whilst the distant hum and pure fragrance of the new-born creation softly ascended in silent homage to heaven, God, like a tender father,

spread as it were his Almighty hands aloft in the skies. He gazed upon his works with benignant fondness, and sanctified them with his blessing. If there be any scene we may dwell upon with pleasure and profit to our souls, surely this is one. In its contemplation we may adopt the earnest and affectionate words of St. Peter, when he viewed the transfiguration of his blessed Lord, and exclaimed, "It is good for us to be here!"

But the scene has been changed. The disobedience of man originally defaced, and, alas! man's perverseness still continues to deface it. Though, however, my friends, we cannot restore to the Sabbath-day its former purity and innocence, we may yet make it a day of prayer and praise—a day of serious meditation and religious employment. I will, then, proceed to point out some of the leading duties, which the return of each Sunday calls upon us to perform.

In the first place, we are commanded

to rest from our worldly pursuits. How in our professed compliance with this command, do we direct our conduct?—by man's opinion, by our own convenience, or by God's law? Perhaps we fancy a mixture of all three will give the best rule, or what in this case is wrongly termed "a happy medium;" that by half serving God, and half pleasing ourselves, we shall pass the Sabbath in a very correct and proper manner. But, my brethren, let me ask you, is there any foundation for such an opinion in the word of God? Is the circumstance which we have just been considering, namely, God's resting from ALL *His* works on this day, any rule for our pursuing OUR'S? Does the fourth commandment, delivered by God himself from Mount Sinai, undisturbed by any of those little saving clauses, which man has since inserted for his own convenience—does this commandment bear us out in such a notion? No; in these two instances we find the origin di-

vine, and the commandment peremptory.

That there are some necessary works to be performed on this day, there can be no doubt; but beyond what are positively necessary, none ought to be transacted.

Many excuse themselves from adhering strictly to this commandment, by a reference to our Saviour's conduct and opinion with respect to the observance of the Sabbath-day. But here again is an instance in which man interprets more for his own ease, than for the glory of God.

When our blessed Saviour permitted his disciples to pluck the ears of corn, and made use of that remarkable expression, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,"\* we are not to understand (as some assert) that any sanction is given to us for profaning it by deeds of pleasure or convenience. He was addressing himself to the Pharisees, who prided themselves upon the

\* Mark ii. 27.



mere outward observances of the day, and who gladly caught hold of any pretext for rendering our Saviour obnoxious to his hearers. In his reproof to their teasing and flippant cavillings, He at once asserted his own DIVINE right to determine this point, and at the same time laid down a proper distinction between necessary and unnecessary works to be performed on this day. His own practice in this particular fully confirms this view of the subject ; for if we follow Him through all the acts of his holy life, we shall find that He was always constant in his attendance at the places of public worship ; and that when He wrought any works on the Sabbath-day, they were invariably works of mercy and love ; such as healing the sick, comforting the afflicted, and proclaiming in the winning accents of compassionate tenderness the way of salvation to a guilty world. Let us, then, before we presume to follow any employment on the Sabbath-day, be convinced that it is

actually necessary. Let us, before we suffer ourselves to take any recreation, be quite sure that it is proper, and that it does not interfere with our bounden duties on that holy day, which God hath set apart for our soul's good. Let us not trifle with our consciences in this important matter ; and, above all, let us, when we find ourselves hesitating between a choice of worldly interest and God's glory on this day, reject the one and faithfully adhere to the other.

The next important duty to be observed on the Sabbath-day, is attendance on public worship. Those who feel gratitude to God, and anxiety for their soul's salvation, will gladly press into the courts of the Lord's house on this sacred day. No vain excuses of business or pleasure will hinder them from attending it. If sickness or any other cause prevents them, they will lament over their absence as a lost privilege, and will pray to God to remove the obstacle. Such will doubt-

less be the feelings of the religious part of mankind. But, my friends, is it so with many who call themselves Christians? Is it so with the world at large?—is it so with those around us?—and more especially is it so with our own selves? When pleasure draws one way and religion the other, which obtains the victory? When God summons and man invites, to which house do we go?—to the house of prayer or to the house of amusement? These are questions which may appear trifling to those who think blindly or superficially; but in our replies to them, much is involved.

Let me put here a simple case. Suppose a benevolent prince, who had secured the love of his subjects by acts of kindness, were to fix his residence in any particular neighbourhood. Suppose that he knew exactly the wants of each person within his district, and had both the wish and power to relieve them. Suppose that on one day in the week, he

threw open the doors of his palace, and invited all of any degree to come to him. Suppose further, that he required that every one should attend in order to secure the benefits of his offers. Need I say, my friends, what would be the behaviour of all around his neighbourhood? Would they not extol his generosity, and press eagerly towards his palace on the appointed day? The desire of obtaining his favours, nay, even his passing notice, would bring hundreds to the spot through all difficulties. They would leave their employments, their amusements for the time, and would flock eagerly to the great man's house: they would endeavour by their attendance to secure the promised advantages; and would by no means let any thing, if possible, hinder them from paying this outward mark of respect to their benefactor. You herein behold the dealings of God towards mankind.

God has appointed a day for hearing the prayers and receiving the homage of



his creatures. His courts are thrown open on that day, and all are commanded and invited to enter. He has promised to be in the midst of those assembled, and to hearken unto all who apply to Him in his holy house. His Almighty power and presence, and goodness, are not confined to any particular district. God is every where: "If we climb up to heaven, He is there; if we go down to hell, He is there also. If we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall his hand lead us, and his right hand shall hold us."\*

But God not only promises temporal comforts which perish; but He offers us spiritual blessings which perish not. How happens it, then, that man is so alive to worldly advantages, and yet so insensible to the benefits of spiritual favours? How happens it that man will be so ready to accept the invitation of an earthly prince,

\* Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8, 9.

and yet continue to disregard the summons of the King of kings?

It is simply because they feel not their spiritual wants, and therefore, although invited to the courts of his house who alone can save, they prefer the pursuit of present ease and comfort to their souls' future safety. Let not this be the case with us, my brethren: let not God's house be open, and we be found unwilling to enter it. Let us frame no vain excuses; and should our own weakness or other circumstances arise to make us hesitate which to do—whether to turn our steps to God's temple, or follow our own devices—let us examine ourselves with candour, and think whether the excuses with which we now only half satisfy our consciences, will be such excuses as we shall dare to plead on the great judgment day, when we shall be required to give an account of every mispent Sabbath, during our pilgrimage on earth.

But although attendance on public

worship forms an important feature in the duties of a Christian Sabbath, (and is one which no thinking man can or will neglect,) yet we are not to suppose that when we have been to church, we have done all that is required of us. Private devotion and meditation, a resolute turning from worldly thoughts, and a determination to devote ourselves to God and the great business of salvation, ought to be our prevailing desires—our religious exercises, on this sacred day. In short, although on every day the care of our souls should be our first consideration, yet more especially on the Sabbath-day are we commanded to bestow all our best faculties towards accomplishing this great end. I have been led into such length by my remarks on this important matter, that it will be out of our power to advance further in the chapter under consideration. Let me, then, briefly conclude by urging a few more observations upon this subject.

We have already viewed the Sabbath as a day of rest, hallowed by God and ordained for the spiritual and temporal comforts of man. How is it doubly hallowed to us, my friends, when we call to our minds, that on this day, which we as Christians celebrate as the Sabbath, on this very day, our blessed Saviour rose from the dead, setting his signet, as it were, upon his divine mission, and securing to us the blessings of his meritorious cross and passion.

As on the seventh day of the creation, the sun rose in full majesty, lighting up the vast universe with his cheering rays, so on the first Christian Sabbath did the still more glorious sun of righteousness rise with healing on his wings, chasing away the darkness of idolatry and guilt, and diffusing over the world the glad and beaming rays of the holy gospel. Any subject that brings us to the contemplation of our blessed Saviour, and all that He has done for us, must be alike profit-



able and engaging. Now, I know no thoughts that can better employ our time on Sundays, than the reflections suggested by this great event. Let us begin each Sabbath morning with the thought, that on this day Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and we shall find it the means of leading our minds into a train of useful and pious reflections. We shall be led to the remembrance of his perfect life and atoning sacrifice, and whilst we gain example from the one, and hopes of redemption from the other, we shall feel our hearts glow with pious and grateful love towards that great Being who hath thus wrought out such mercies for our salvation. Touched with a sense of the guilt which required *such* a sacrifice, and alarmed at our own insufficiency, we shall flee to that Saviour's cross for pardon and succour. We shall lean upon Him as our rock of defence ; and, to our unspeakable comfort, we may reflect, that He now sits at the right hand of

God, as our pleader and advocate. "Christ has risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead ; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."\*

If we, my brethren, commence each Sabbath day with such meditations as these, there is little fear of our slighting its sacred object, or failing in its holy enjoyments. It will no longer be a struggle with us, whether we will serve God or please ourselves on this day. The love of Christ will be the theme of our meditations, and the preparation for eternity will be the great end of our pursuits, the guiding star of our hopes. If we reach ardently towards heavenly things, we shall feel that every thing in comparison with "the one thing needful," is but as dust in the balance, or chaff, which the wind scattereth.

\* 1 Cor. xv. 20—22.

In a previous part of this lecture (which of necessity has been rather long) we dwelt for a few moments upon the moral and natural beauty of the first Sabbath morning. I recall your attention to that lovely scene of peaceful innocence, because I think it will suitably close this subject, and because, in my own meditations upon it, I always love to fancy it the type and shadow of that eternal place of rest promised to all true believers. The idea may be somewhat fanciful, but if it be allowable to picture to ourselves any scenes of future happiness, surely this one of purity and holiness may be admitted into our contemplations.

When we think of hereafter becoming inhabitants of such a scene, of being again restored to the image of our divine Maker, of being again admitted into communion with Him, and of being reinstated in our former blissful innocence; when we think of hereafter wandering in this lovely Paradise—Jesus Christ for our shep-

herd, at peace with our Almighty Father, and again united to those dear friends, who were the sharers of our earthly joys, and sorrows, and affections, surely our hearts must be cheered and elevated, and our souls touched with a longing desire to attain such heavenly joys.

Let us earnestly strive after such glorious rewards, and whilst we pray to God for his help—whilst we appeal to our Redeemer for his reconciling aid, let us bear in mind, that nothing will more contribute to fit us for this happy state, than a strict observance of the Sabbath day, to keep it holy unto the Lord our God.



## LECTURE IV.

IN my last lecture, I entered at considerable length into the duties of the Sabbath day.

We will now resume the interesting account of the creation, and examine a few more of its particulars, before we enter upon those events which so lamentably succeeded the formation of Adam.

“ These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth,

and there was not a man to till the ground.”\*

In these verses Moses simply declares that the history of the creation he narrates, is the true account, as distinguished from those fables and fanciful notions written by the poets and philosophers of old. “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.”

We will now pass on to the 6th verse, where we find, that

“There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.”†

We herein may observe a fresh display of the tender kindness of God towards his favoured creature man. The earth had already been completed for the reception of Adam ; but as if to welcome his appearance upon it, with still greater marks of favour, God caused a gentle moisture to rise from the ground, and

\* Genesis ii. 4, 5.

† Gen. ii. 6.

fall in refreshing dews upon its newly-created beauties.

We well know the lovely effects of a recent shower. The bright-glad look of reviving vegetation, the rich perfume of drooping flowers, the pure smell of the teeming earth, all conspire to render it a moment of peculiar sweetness; and at such a time, the face of nature appears to beam with grateful smiles, and to breathe forth its speechless homage to the Giver of all good. It was probably with the kind view of making every thing delightful to the senses, that God thus refreshed the earth, before the entrance of the first man upon its surface.

How gracious and condescending does it seem, that the high and lofty One—the great Jehovah, should so prepare the earth for the creature of his hands! Yet so it was; and when Adam first opened his eyes upon the world, he beheld it decked out in all its plenitude of charms, and bathed in the freshness of reviving show-

ers ! It must indeed have been a scene of surpassing loveliness ; but, my friends, may we not learn from the kindness of God herein displayed, a useful lesson in our own daily conduct ? We acknowledge the tender forethought of God in thus replenishing the earth before Adam entered upon it, but how apt are we to fail practically in this acknowledgment ! Are we not often tempted to utter words of distrust and complaint, when the language of our lips ought to be that of praise and confidence ?

Now in respect to this particular point of God's providence : there is no person so insensible to the beauties of nature, as not to relish the cheerfulness of fine weather,—there is no person so ignorant of natural causes and effects, as not to feel the necessity of rain ; and yet these blessings succeed each other, filling our garners with increase, supplying us with food for ourselves, and fodder for our cattle, without our raising our hearts in grati-



tude to Him, who thus graciously provides for us. But, not only do we fail to praise God for these blessings, but we go frequently still further in our ingratitude, and because the returns of rain and drought, clouds and sunshine, do not succeed each other exactly as we wish, we immediately begin to fret and complain. Instead of leaving the issue to Him who orders all things for the best, we perplex ourselves with a thousand fears, we become distrustful, and fancy that nothing *can* go right. I leave it to you to determine whether this description is overdrawn. When we remember the complaints we daily hear—when we call to our minds the murmuring of others, and very probably the murmurings of our own hearts, if the weather does not exactly suit our present wants and conveniences, I think you will agree with me, that in this matter we are all of us too apt to be unmindful of God's providential care over us. It is the height of folly to mur-

mur at what is unavoidable ; and it is worse than folly—it is ingratitude, to murmur against the will of God in this particular instance. How frequently, I may say how invariably, are we shamed out of our distrust by God's goodness ! After days and weeks perhaps of fears and disquietude, lest our crops should be injured, and our interests sacrificed, a fine season or harvest succeeds, and instead of our prospects being ruined, as we rashly imagined, we find that God had *all the time* been secretly planning for our good, whilst we were murmuring at the slightest *appearance* of His disregard. Let us, then, endeavour to correct our conduct in this matter ; let us not be cast down, and repine at every little seeming hindrance ; but rather let us trust all and every thing to the goodness of God. Remember, that when God caused the dew to rise first from the earth, and “replenish its weariness,” He did it for the comfort of man ; and that notwithstand-

ing man's subsequent fall and perpetual provocation, He still continues, *in this respect*, (as in every other,) to watch over man's interests with parental kindness. "God's ways are far above our ways, we cannot comprehend them;" but this as Christians we ought to know and act upon, that He causes every thing to work together for the good of those who truly love Him, and that however at times he may *appear* to withdraw the sunshine of his favour, yet still we may rest assured, we are far more secure under his protecting wings, than if left to the guidance of our own short-sighted views and wishes.

We have already been told in the preceding chapter, that God formed man. In the following verse, we learn more particularly the circumstances of his creation.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."\*

\* Gen. ii. 7.

There are two things in this description well worthy our attention. The lessons taught by it are extremely opposite in their application ; but each, if duly considered, has its moral and religious uses.

The first is this, that out of dust, man was originally formed !

And does not this fact, my friends, speak to us a most powerful truth ? Can we pride ourselves upon beauty, or station, or riches, or consequence, when we call to our minds that we were all formed of the clay of the ground ? Can we presume to think highly of our bodies, when we remember that after all we are but dust ? When we read, that our bodies were formed of the dust of the earth, and when we are certain that after a few brief years of continuance in this world, we shall crumble again into the same common matter, how can we attach *so much* importance to what is comparatively mean and worthless ? No, my brethren, it is



to the second particular in this description to which we as Christians must look. When we are told that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, man becomes at once invested with dignity and consequence. The body itself is indeed still secondary; but, as the deposit of the breath of God himself, it rises vastly above every previous work of the creation. It possesses a dignity unpossessed by any other breathing creature! No such operation as this attended the formation of any other living being. God simply said, let there be such and such creatures, and forthwith they started into life and animation. Of the creation of man, however, there was (as we have already seen) infinitely more care and deliberation. God begins the work with that remarkable saying, "Let us make man;" and having formed him with capabilities, moral and physical, far superior to any other work of his hands, he breathed into him the breath of life.

God's own breath was infused into man, and truly might he then be said to have indeed become a living soul.

The breath of God not only endowed man with animation, which is comparatively trifling, and which he enjoys in common with other animals, but it endowed him with qualities of mind and heart; it endowed him with reason and understanding; and, above all, it endowed him with a soul, which can never die. Man thus became that rational responsible being, which the wisdom of God intended him to be.

Whilst, then, we recall to our remembrance that our bodies are but the dust of the ground, and whilst the remembrance humbles our worldly pride, let us also bear in mind, that these bodies have been animated by the breath of God himself! and that having received from Him this divine spirit, we must take care what "manner of persons we are," lest, by our bad deeds, we pollute that frame into

which God has infused his divine breath. Could we bear this truth constantly in mind, how would it assist us in subduing those evil passions, those debasing sins, the commission of which do such despite to the Spirit of God ! Could a man once bring it home to his heart and understanding, that his body is animated, and his mind embued with the Spirit of God, would not this consideration powerfully operate upon him, when he was tempted by drunkenness, or debauchery, or any other sin public or private, to debase his nature ? Would not the thought stand forth as a bright and friendly beacon, to warn him from falling into those sins which are so contrary to this divine Spirit, so abhorrent to the pure nature of God ? and would not this thought guide him by its steady flame into that secure path, which leads to true godliness and eternal life ?

We proceed now to learn that “ the Lord God planted a garden eastward in

Eden : and there He put the man whom He had formed." \*

It is most probable that this garden was planned on the third day of the creation, and that Adam, being now duly formed, and gifted with reason, was placed in it.

When we think of Paradise, we think of it as the seat of delight. The word Eden signifies pleasure, and the "idea of rational comfort is still strongly associated, in rational minds, with the pure and simple charms of a garden." † To the rich and poor (independently of its various uses) the garden offers many sources of pure and serene enjoyment. It is that little domestic haven of rest, into which we are all, more or less, disposed to resort, when weakened by sickness, harassed with cares, or saddened by misfortune. The man of wealth and pleasure may here shake off the artificial and glittering allurements of life ; he may

\* Genesis ii. 8.

† Bishop Horne.



here refresh his mind with the cool and pure charms of nature, and raise his soul to the Giver of all the comforts that he enjoys.

The poor man, freed from toil and labour, may here sit him down in peaceful quiet, and whilst his family are clustered round him, he also may raise his thoughts to the great Creator of the world, the traces of whose hands are blooming about him. Though perhaps he may not be able to read in the book of life, he may still learn much from the page of nature thus spread before him.

Contrast for a moment such pure scenes of enjoyment with the boisterous and unholy pleasures of the ale-house. Whilst the former is calculated to beguile the mind from worldly thoughts, and to dispose it to hold sweet and salutary communion with God, the latter serves to increase the love of sensual pleasure, and to reduce that body, into which God

has breathed a portion of his Holy Spirit, to a level with the brutes that perish. Whilst the pleasures of a garden will serve to keep a man at home, quiet and respectable in the bosom of his family, the ale-house will take him from his wife and children, and hurry him into boisterous excesses. Whilst the love of a garden will dispose a man to sit down amongst his family, to instruct his children, and meditate upon the great business of saving his soul, the ale-house is too apt to rob him of these important thoughts, and probably causes him to neglect that family, which by the laws of God and nature, it ought to be his duty and happiness to cherish and support.

And here I would take occasion to observe, (and I feel persuaded that the hint will be taken in the spirit in which I offer it, in the spirit of wishing to do good, rather than in the spirit of prejudice or reproach,) that meditation upon sacred subjects is as much a part of our religious

duties, as that of listening to the word of God. No doubt our meditations would be vain and useless, unless we were first instructed upon what to fix our thoughts ; but I believe it is equally certain, that hearing without meditation is quite as unprofitable. It is from this mistake, I truly believe, that so much false religion prevails in the present day. As the Pharisees thought, that by much and loud praying they should appear religious, so is it too much the fashion of the present age, to fancy that by much hearing, salvation is procured. Do not misunderstand me, and suppose that I would recommend inattention to the word of God : far be such a thought from me, my friends. I would exhort you solemnly—I would invite you affectionately, as your spiritual friend, to lose no opportunity of hearing the saving truths of the gospel ; but, at the same time, I feel it my conscientious duty to observe, that the time which many occupy in running after various

preachers, and in stirring up their minds by loud and exciting stimulants, would be more usefully employed, (and in a manner far more pleasing to God himself,) in the bosoms of their respective families, in teaching their children by easy lessons the principles of holiness; in making known to them as soon as their little understandings can comprehend it, their only hope of salvation through Christ, in raising their voices to God in decent family devotion, and in talking and meditating upon spiritual subjects. In this peaceful, and I will add *Christian* course, there is true piety and sound reason. It is like drinking at a pure fountain, which refreshes without intoxicating. It is drinking at the well of life of those pure and living waters which cheer the soul and cool away its evil propensities.

The opposite course appears like the drinking of ardent spirits, it excites and inflames the soul for the time being, but it is calculated to leave it afterwards in a



state of moral exhaustion ! It produces that false zeal, which heats the fancy, but, alas ! neither purifies the heart nor actuates the conduct. Let me then advise you to take heed in this matter, “ Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Let no vain excuses ever hinder you from making the hearing of God’s word the first, the dearest object of your Sabbath-day pleasures. Attend constantly where that gracious word, those glad tidings of salvation are proclaimed by the appointed ordinances of this favoured land, but remember the Apostle’s admonition, not to be tossed about by every breath of vain doctrine. Having listened with gratitude to God’s word read and preached, retire to your homes. There in the privacy of your family circle bless God for the means of grace which He has afforded you during the day past—reflect deeply upon the truths which you have heard explained and enforced—examine into

your own hearts and see whether you really desire to profit by it, or whether you are still too indifferent to the care of your immortal souls. Pray to Almighty God "to strengthen, stablish, settle you." "Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still."\*

And be assured, my friends, that God will be with and amongst you. Such quiet and heartfelt exercises of religion are far more acceptable in His eyes, than those public and loud displays of devotion, which in times past drew from our blessed Saviour's lips that severe rebuke to the Pharisees. And to your comfort reflect, that the holy Jesus himself has declared that God "who seeth in secret (that is, who not only hears their secret praying, but loves those who serve Him unostentatiously) will at the last reward them openly;" that not unto those who cry aloud "Lord! Lord!" will He give the kingdom of heaven, but to those who

\* Psalm iv. 4.

repose meekly upon the merits of Christ's cross for redemption, and who show that their faith is sincere, by directing their behaviour, both in secular and religious matters, according to the pure precepts of His holy gospel!

But to return to the subject from which we have digressed, we proceed to read, that, "Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."\*

It is impossible to conceive a more happy state than that of Adam, when first admitted into Paradise. The ground naturally brought forth every thing that was lovely and convenient: all was beautiful perfection; and Adam, in a happy estate of peace and innocence, wandered forth amidst the charms of nature, the favoured servant of Almighty God!

\* Gen. ii. 9.

We find, however, that in this Paradise there were two remarkable trees planted, namely, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil !

Let us then inquire briefly into the meaning of this passage, and see what practical instruction we may derive from the inquiry.

The tree of life was so called, because if Adam had continued to have eaten of that tree, he never would have been acquainted with sin, neither would he ever have become subject to death, temporal or spiritual. Such was the virtue of that tree as ordained by God himself.

Whilst the other trees by which Adam was surrounded supplied him with food for the body, the fruit of this particular tree secured to him, as long as he ate of it, the blessings of a glorious immortality. It was appointed to Adam as the means of preserving his own innocence and his Maker's favour, just as our sacraments now are the outward means of our



obtaining grace. This tree was also the type of that eternal state to which God had designed to raise man, after he had passed his time of probation in this world. It also stood forth in this lovely paradise, representing by its luxuriant foliage the life which God had just bestowed upon man. May we not trace in this very first transaction, the tender and delicate kindness of God towards him? When we read that this tree was planted in the *midst* of the garden, may we not reasonably conclude that it was so planted for some kind and wise purpose? It was congenial with the benevolent views of God, that Adam should continue to eat of this tree of life. In order, therefore, to preserve a perpetual memory of this, and to keep Adam, as it were, in obedience, God planted it in a conspicuous spot.

And such, indeed, has been the nature of God's dealings with men ever since the world began. We are told (and told truly) that God is not willing that any

should perish, but that all should have everlasting life. His noble acts towards man have proved this gracious truth beyond all doubt, and in this opening covenant with him, his merciful disposition to *save*, is promptly and most beautifully displayed.

The other remarkable tree which was planted in the garden of Paradise, was probably called, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," because, when God forbade Adam from tasting of its fruit, "He made known to him his will respecting his destiny. He revealed to him the nature of his duty and a sense of his spiritual danger—the fearful consequences of disobedience and the prescribed conditions of life or death, happiness or misery." Adam was forbidden to eat of the fruit of this tree, in order that he might give a proof of his obedience to God's will. It was then the only proof God required; and so long as Adam continued to give it—he knew nothing of sin—nothing of

danger—nothing of death—no loss of the value of good, by the loss of it!

In this blissful state of innocence did Adam commence his existence. Alas! my friends, we have all too much cause to lament how soon he fell from this glorious state! The consideration of that awful event will form the matter of my next lecture. In the meanwhile, let us review the subject under discussion, and fix upon our hearts the thoughts to which it naturally gives birth.

Withdrawing then our ideas from the happy state in which this stage of the account leaves Adam, let us look upon our present condition, as his fallen descendants.

This world may in one sense be said to be our Paradise—the spot in which we are placed to secure the salvation of our souls: the tree of life is our blessed Saviour, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil may represent Satan and all those temptations which assault the soul, and obstruct our path to heaven.

Let us then examine how we behave in this our state of trial. Whilst we hang with breathless eagerness upon that portion of the history which describes the temptation of Eve; whilst we blame the folly which could induce our first parents to forfeit so much good for the paltry gratification of tasting of the forbidden fruit, let us be quite sure that we are not acting a similar part in this our day of trial. Remember, we are each of us placed in this world with an immortal soul to save. For the salvation of this soul, there are certain conditions prescribed.

It is true, we do not commence our trial like Adam. His nature was then perfectly innocent. Till he ate of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," no lurking love of sin, no proneness to corruption beset his path. One simple command was all he had to obey, and had he continued to have obeyed it, we should never have been at enmity with God. But, alas! he did fall from his lofty estate,



and immediately the awful consequences of his fall ensued. Sin and misery entered into the world. No longer were the descendants of Adam to inherit from him a pure nature, but hearts defiled, and corrupted, and alienated from the favour of God. From that moment all was changed. A new covenant was established between God and man, and under that covenant we are now to be saved.

As Adam was commanded to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, so are we now commanded to forsake those hateful sins, to which our fallen natures dispose us. Temptations arising from the snares of the world, from our own wayward inclinations, from the allurements of passion, are all to be regarded as fruits of that forbidden tree. We must resolutely resist them as noxious fruits; like the deadly nightshade which hangs its delicate tracery and tempting clusters upon our hedge-rows, they only serve to beguile and poison. If we per-

sist in tasting of these fruits, we are destroying our souls; we are consenting to enjoy momentary gratification at the imminent risk of incurring future and never-ending misery; we are preferring the guilty, uncertain pleasures of a few brief years to the exalted happiness of an endless eternity; we are preferring to eat of that tree which withers and destroys the soul, rather than of that tree, the divine fruit of which will secure to us the blessings of Revelation. Let us, my friends, be more wise: God "is not willing that *any* should perish."

As He planted the tree of life in a conspicuous spot for the advantage of Adam, so now does He extend to us, freely and clearly, the means of salvation. No sooner did man fall, than God condescended to open a way of salvation through a Redeemer. No sooner were Adam and Eve driven from paradise; no sooner had He pronounced the just curse of their disobedience upon them, and

upon all who have proceeded or ever will proceed from them—than like a tender parent pitying his erring children, He tempered his anger with mercy. He planned and made known to them a way of escape from eternal death. Lest this grand offer of salvation should be slighted by man's perverseness, or obscured by the clouds of idolatry, God has continued to preserve a record of his will through each succeeding age. He has raised up prophets and teachers to proclaim it to mankind. He has given laws for the government of men's actions. He has provided the means of grace for man's help and support; and to crown all, at the appointed time, he sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ into the world, that all who believe on Him and the purposes for which He was sent, might be restored to the blessings of his Almighty favour, and the glories of immortal life!

But not only in these leading features may we trace the tender anxiety of God

for the salvation of his creatures. In the more minute and common occurrences of life, the same merciful disposition to draw us to Himself is still as manifestly shown; circumstances perpetually happen in the world—in the neighbourhood around us, in the limited circle of our families, in the secret suggestions of our own hearts, to rouse us from spiritual sloth, to serve the living God.

It rests with the obstinacy of our own hearts, and not with the indifference of our heavenly Father, if we remain cold or insensible to religious impressions. We are too apt, in this respect, to act like wayward children, who climb the brink of a precipice regardless of the gestures and anxious warnings of the tender parent, who strives to save them from headlong destruction. Let us, my friends, be earnest in our pursuit after divine things; it is true, the path to heaven is not smooth and free from difficulties, as it was when Adam first



trod in it—but by the gracious exercise of God's will, it is yet open to all who will consent to follow that blessed guide, whom God has appointed to be the way, the truth, and the life. Although by Adam's fall we forfeited the privilege of eating of that original tree of life, yet, God has raised up another tree for our salvation, the encircling branches of which extend over the whole world. Our blessed Saviour is to us that tree of life! Under the shelter of this glorious tree, let us seek for refuge and support: casting away the sin that doth so easily beset us, let us press towards this divine tree of eternal life; let us eat freely, let us eat gratefully of its saving fruit: it is offered unreservedly to all, and to our comfort, we may rest assured, that all who eat of it in faith and sincerity of heart, will be saved with an everlasting salvation.

The time is fast hastening on, when I who now speak, and you who now hear, will have done with this world and all its

perishable cares and enjoyments. Nothing will be of importance to us, but the manner in which we have prepared our souls for eternity. Have we persisted in eating of the poisonous fruits of sin—have we neglected the tree of life, the holy Jesus—have we preferred the fleeting pleasures of this world to the promised happiness of the next—fearful indeed must be the consequences.

But on the other hand, have we resorted to the way of salvation—have we endeavoured to obey the commandments of our God—have we leaned faithfully upon the cross of our Redeemer—happy indeed will be our lot; we shall be gathered under the fostering branches of that divine tree. We shall be sheltered from every storm—welcomed with joy to that heavenly Paradise prepared and kept in store for all true believers; we shall dwell there for ever and ever. Freed from sin, and pain, and sorrow, we shall become the accepted

servants, the redeemed people of Almighty God. "The Lord will be our shepherd; therefore shall we lack nothing!"\* The time of our trial will be ended. No temptation will assault, no sin pollute us! We shall exchange a life, stained by transgression, saddened by sorrows, and ending in corruption, for "a life of glory, and honour and immortality;" a life, like Christ's own, incorruptible and undefiled, serene as the azure skies, and secure as the eternal throne of God!

\* Psalm xxiii. 1.

## LECTURE V.

IN my last lecture I described to you the properties of the two remarkable trees planted in the garden of Eden. We now come to God's restriction respecting them.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou *shalt surely die*.”\*

It may appear to some that the punishment herein denounced far exceeded the nature of the offence; and to others it may seem that the restriction was frivo-

\* Gen. ii. 16, 17.



lous, when compared with the awful consequences at stake. I would reply to those who thus think—first, that it is highly presumptuous for man to set up his finite reason against the counsels of a God of infinite wisdom and goodness; and secondly, that if he suffer himself to reason at all upon the subject, he must ever do so in an humble dependance upon the assisting grace of God. He will then perceive in this restriction an admirable union of reasonableness and mercy. Was it not reasonable that man, created in the image of God and having the moral law written in his heart, should give some proof of obedience to the God who formed him? Was it not natural that man should love the gracious Author of his being above all things? And was it not reasonable that God himself should establish some test, by which man's love and sense of dependance upon Him might be proved?

We must also bear in mind, that a trial

could scarcely have been made in any of the moral precepts. Was there any thing to tempt Adam to fall into the sin of idolatry? Rather, my friends, was not every thing around him calculated to fix his soul in grateful love and adoration upon God alone? Was there any possibility of Adam's violating the laws against murder and adultery, when there were only two persons in the world, and those two drawn to each other by all the bonds of tenderest and hallowed affections? Could Adam have been guilty of the sins of theft and coveting, when God had put him in possession of the whole world?

Nor is the mercy of the covenant less apparent than its reasonableness, when we take into consideration the mildness and simplicity of the restriction. By abstaining from the fruit of the forbidden tree—by yielding this one simple proof of love and obedience to God, Adam and Eve were to have had every blessing continued to them. At the same time, God

did not conceal from His creatures the tremendous consequences of disobedience. They were clearly set forth in those awful words, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Thus were the good and evil plainly placed before them.

By the expression, "thou shalt surely die," we are not to understand immediate death of the body. We well know that Adam and Eve lived many years after they had incurred the penalty due to their disobedience. It means, that from the moment they tasted of the fruit of the forbidden tree, they would forfeit immortality, and become subject to pain and sorrow and sickness, and finally to death itself. But, alas! not only to the death of the body, but of the soul also. Of this mournful truth, however, we shall have occasion to treat at large in some future lecture.

We proceed now to read how God, in his kindness towards man, raised up a

partner to share with him the joys of paradise.

“ And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.”\*

What an idea does this account give us of the superiority of understanding with which God originally endowed Adam! and how does it fill the mind with wonder and delight, when we picture to ourselves the extraordinary scene which this remarkable incident must have produced! Amongst the countless variety of living

\* Gen. ii. 18—20.



things, however, which passed in review before Adam, there was not yet found a suitable companion for him. We read, therefore, that "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man."\*

In this account there is an awful and mysterious exercise of the Almighty's power. In perusing it, we cannot fail to admire the wisdom and tender kindness of God in His mode of performing this work. Whilst the deep sleep into which God lulled Adam, prevented the pain which the operation must have occasioned to his body, it appears to have soothed rather than obscured his mental

\* Gen. ii. 21—23.

perceptions ; for the moment he awakes, we find him perfectly conscious of all that had been doing, and declaring the name of his partner, correspondent with the peculiar circumstances that attended her formation.

The account serves to remind us of the sacred rights and obligations of the married state ; and also, in a social point of view, how thoroughly dependent we all are, one upon another. When we read, too, that God “brought the woman unto man,” does it not undoubtedly imply, that all attachments and connexions that are formed between man and woman, unless they are sanctioned by God’s ordinance, are guilty, inasmuch as they are opposed to the direct rule which God himself established in this first union of Adam and Eve ?

We now come, my friends, to the description of that disastrous event, which brought sin and death into the world, and which alienated our first parents and all

of us, (who are their descendants,) from the favour of God. I will read the account simply as it stands recorded in the Bible.

“ Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden : but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die : for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and

gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened." \*

We are told in the Bible that " angels sinned and kept not their first estate."

Although created in happy innocence, they had at the period of this history fallen from their high estate and had incurred the displeasure of God. Wandering in forlorn wretchedness, and rendered desperate by a fearful prospect of future wrath, they watched the glorious works of God's hands with envious malignity. And when at length God formed man and endowed him with those noble qualities which they by sin had destroyed in their own persons, their jealousy burned like fire ; and under their captain and leader Satan, they resolved to oppose themselves to the gracious designs of the Almighty. Accordingly we find Satan assuming the disguise of a serpent, and with all the crafty cunning which now

\* Gen. iii. 1—7.



characterizes that reptile, insinuating himself into the lovely and peaceful shades of Eden and commencing his malicious attack. And thus, my friends, does the great enemy of man continue to steal upon us unawares. Whilst we fancy ourselves (from external circumstances) secure, some temptation is lurking around us, ready like the serpent of old to beguile us from our path of duty. Our safety must be seated in keeping close to God and his word—in loving righteousness, that is, in doing what is right and fearing to offend. We must not trust to circumstances to preserve us from sin, but to resolutions made beforehand and in a firm dependence upon the assisting aid of God.

It is very probable that Adam and Eve had been either struck with the beauty or with the sagacity of the serpent, and that Satan perceiving this, assumed that shape as being most attractive and most likely to enable him to effect his guilty design.

In the serpent's opening address there

is a union of specious cunning and taunting impiety truly fiend-like. He artfully begins by asking the question, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" implying first, that the words of God's mouth were not so inviolably true; and secondly, that by His not permitting our parents to taste of every tree, He was exercising over them an overbearing tyranny. To this ensnaring question Eve should never have listened, but the wily influence of Satan had begun its deadly work in her heart. She not only listened to this artful insinuation against the truth and kindness of her God, but she ventured to reply to it. Her reply was by no means couched in those terms of honest indignation with which a person repels an attack upon the character of a gracious benefactor, but we find in it a cowardly leaning towards the suggestions of the tempter.

Let us contrast God's own words of restriction with Eve's reply to Satan, and

we shall plainly perceive this : God said, “ of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

Eve’s version of God’s mandate is vastly different. She says, “ We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

In this answer to Satan, Eve made use of one expression, of which God never made use, and essentially altered the force of another. God never said, “ Ye shall not touch it.” The secret risings of rebellion had commenced in Eve’s heart, and she probably added this expression to give Satan an idea of the severity of God’s command.

It *serves* however to teach us a very useful lesson. If we wish to flee from

the tyranny of sin, we must not permit ourselves to go into the ways of it. We must avoid all occasions and pursuits which tend to ensnare our souls, or like Eve, by approaching too near to the forbidden tree, we shall be tempted to taste of its fruits. Our Saviour's wisdom foresaw this snare, when He taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

In the other respect, Eve entirely changed the force of God's words. God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt *surely* die," whilst Eve, although she dwells ungenerously upon the strictness of God's command, softens down the consequences of sin, and merely adds, "*lest* ye die."

You must perceive the essential difference; and I dwell the more particularly upon the point, because the kind of reasoning is so very similar to the reasoning with which we are apt to deceive *our own* consciences. Are we not apt to soften down the consequences of sin?



Do we not frequently oppose *our notions* to God's unerring declarations?

Do we not suffer ourselves to encourage hopes and expectations, which if we read the Bible in Christian candour and spirit, are not open to us in the way in which we admit them? Are we not apt to speak false peace to our minds, instead of striving after the things which make for true peace?

Do we not often endeavour to bend God's word to *our wishes*, instead of bending our wills to God's word?

All these ways of flying from the truth (which, be it remembered, is unchangeable) are the secret workings of Satan. They are the foundation-stones of unbelief. They are the "straw and stubble," upon which imperfect faith is erected. And thus it was with Eve. The work of unbelief was beginning in her heart, and the first fruits of it were shown in her altering *God's words*, and substituting words of her own in their place. We shall, how-

ever, perceive in her case, how rapidly such small beginnings of unbelief worked on, for her ultimate destruction. “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”\*

“And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die.”

Perceiving that the faith of Eve was beginning to waver, the artful tempter grew more bold and fearless. He at once asserted, “ye shall not die,” and then impiously calling upon God to bear witness to his blasphemous falsehood, he adds, “God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

We find no attempt on the part of Eve to contradict this impious assertion;—an assertion which impugned the high excellence of her gracious God, and which set at defiance the goodness and greatness of Him, whom it had hitherto been her duty

\* James iii. 5.

and delight to obey. Alas! my friends, the poison had begun its treacherous work upon her heart—it was gradually stealing through all her veins, and hurrying her on to destruction.

The wily tempter accompanied his assertion with a promise “that their eyes should be opened, that they should be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

It is still one of the characteristic marks of sinners, that when they have reduced themselves to misery, they are never easy till they have dragged down others to a similar level. And so it was with Satan and his fallen angels! They had incurred the wrath of God. They were in open rebellion against his government, and they now sought to bring Adam and Eve into the same unhappy and ruinous condition. Satan knew that the moment Eve could be persuaded to eat of the forbidden tree, her eyes would be opened. He knew perfectly the fearful consequences that would immediately ensue, and it was his

malicious pleasure to lead her into this dreadful snare. He therefore skilfully painted the promised advantages in false colours. He tells her, "They will be as gods *knowing* good and evil," meaning, that they would no longer be dependent creatures, but, like their Maker, replete with knowledge and understanding, subject to no authority—fettered by no restriction—bound by no rules! Thus was the crafty net spread out for the yielding Eve. Her principles were already undermined by the workings of unbelief. She listened to the tempter's false reasoning; she gazed upon the luscious fruit which hung suspended from the boughs of the forbidden tree; her whole nature became filled with a desire of tasting it; she opened her heart to the suggestions of Satan, and she closed it, from the admonition of her kind and gracious Creator: hurried on by passion, which unbelief had engendered in her heart, she approached the tempter, she reached forth her hand,

and taking of the proffered, the forbidden fruit, *she did eat*. Then, my friends, was the sad die cast ; all was now over. In one short moment of temptation Satan triumphed, man fell, and God was dishonoured ! Blessings unspeakable were forfeited, and miseries innumerable were justly incurred !

The next step was to reduce Adam to a level with herself. “ She gave also unto her husband, and he did eat,” “ and the eyes of them both were opened :” not opened to the glorious knowledge and god-like independence which Satan promised, but opened to a wretched sense of their error and the terrible consequences of it. Fear and remorse seized upon their consciences—innocence gave place to shame, and serenity to terror. Penetrated with an overwhelming sense of their abject condition, they fled shuddering from the scene of their guilt, and endeavoured to hide themselves from the presence of their offended God.



“And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day ; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.”\*

It is impossible to conceive a scene of more intense interest or more awful solemnity than the one herein described.

The cool of the day was probably some period of the day in which Adam and Eve had been accustomed to offer up their grateful praises to God for the numberless blessings they enjoyed.

It was probably a period of holy enjoyment, of sweet communion with their heavenly Father, to which they always returned in their days of innocence with infinite delight. Innocent and grateful, they presented themselves at this cool hour of the day before the presence of their God, who like a tender parent welcomed and dismissed his obedient chil-

\* Gen. iii. 8.

dren with affectionate smiles of condescension and love.

No longer, however, was such heavenly enjoyment in store for Adam and Eve. The cool of the day came, it is true, in its usual rotation, and the voice of the Almighty was heard walking in the calm stillness of the twilight hour in the garden; but alas ! that voice hitherto so welcome, was no longer to speak in the tender accents of love to his fallen—degraded creatures.

Their eyes had been opened by their disobedience, and they knew that wrath, and not mercy, was now their portion.

Trembling with dread—overwhelmed with shame—stung with remorse, they now felt none of that lofty independence which Satan had promised them; but crouching under the displeasure of their offended God, they sought in their ignorance to hide themselves, by the shelter of a few thin trees, from the searching eye of the Almighty. Where was now the

boasted wisdom which they were to have acquired from tasting of the forbidden tree? Alas! the fatal delusion was broken, and they now awaited the approach of God in trembling expectation. The voice of the Almighty broke the fearful silence that now reigned throughout Paradise; it approached nearer and nearer, to the spot where Adam and Eve had sought in vain to conceal themselves. At length that awful question broke forth upon the ear of Adam, "Where art thou?"

Words conveying such terror never sounded in man's ear, nor will words, producing such a thrill of awe, be ever heard again, till the day of the great judgment. Then indeed each and all of us who are here assembled will hear that voice with a startling distinctness; it will be addressed individually to every one of us; it will be a call to which each must answer for himself: no trees, no rocks will shelter us in that day from the searching presence of God. We must all stand

forth, whether sinking with horror, or supported by Christian hope—we must each of us stand forth to receive the sentence of our final doom.

Thousands and thousands, have already gone to their judgment. The opportunity to them of securing peace in that great day, has either been happily accepted or miserably rejected. Upon this awful truth we have no need to dwell. The trees have fallen and so must they lie.

But with respect to ourselves the case is very different; we are still advancing to this point; the offers are still open to us, and it becomes the bounden duty and interest of every person to enquire of himself, “Am I preparing myself for that day, as the word of God assures me I must prepare myself, if I hope to meet my eternal Judge with peace? It is indeed an awful question. It is a question which must make the stoutest heart tremble, but, my brethren, let our trembling be the

*trembling* hope of the Christian. Let not the thoughts which the contemplation of this subject inspires, cast us down; rather let it urge us on to fresh exertion, let it stir us up to religious feelings and exercises, let it remind us of the utter worthlessness of earthly things, when compared with heavenly!—Whilst we feel tremblingly alive to our spiritual danger, let such wholesome fear lead us to flee unto that Saviour, who promises to give rest unto all that come to Him. Let us make Him our master now, that He may condescend to be our Pleader and Advocate in that awful day, when all earthly sources of defence will fail.

But to return to our subject:—we are not to suppose that by God's demanding, "Where art thou?" that he was ignorant of the place of Adam's concealment. The question was doubtless intended to awaken the guilty ones to a confession of their crime. Thus, when in after-times God demanded of Cain, "Where is Abel



thy brother?" Cain persisted in stubborn silence; but God immediately said, (to show that He needed not be told,) "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."\* So in the present instance, God signified simply his approach by the words, "Where art thou?"

"And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And God said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"†

God knew that Adam could have only come to this knowledge by having tasted of the forbidden fruit; but he proceeds (probably with the kind view of winning from him a free avowal of his guilt) to lead him to an open, honest confession. But no: sin was already too deeply seated in the heart of Adam in conse-

\* Bishop Patrick.

† Gen. iii. 10, 11.

quence of his disobedience, and he sought by a paltry excuse to shift the guilt from himself, and impose the burthen of sin upon his gentler partner. "And the man said, The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."\* He throws the blame upon his wife, and at the same time evidently intended that it should recoil upon his Creator. He says reproachfully, "The woman *whom thou gavest* to be my companion for life, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." Thus are we apt to excuse ourselves and palliate our own errors, by casting the blame on others; when, if the case be justly considered, the blame is chargeable upon ourselves alone. The very first sin in which man was detected, he endeavoured to ascribe to the agency of God.

And are we not very apt still to do the same thing? Unreasonable as it may ap-

\* Gen. iii. 12.

pear, yet how frequently both in practice and theory do men act in a similar way ! How many make excuses to clear themselves upon the plea, that circumstances alone led them into this or that sin ! How many declare that they cannot help following such and such a propensity, *because it is their nature !* How many yield to the dictates of passion, and dare to plead this false excuse in extenuation of their error—"that God implanted a proneness to it in their hearts, and surely therefore there can be no great harm in their indulging it !" Such blind excuses do men make, deceiving their own hearts, and despising the laws of God !

The same disposition to cast the blame upon others, is strikingly shown in the conduct of disobedient children. If from a course of false indulgence in their childhood, parents sow the seeds of evil in the habits of their children ; and if in after-life these children become hardened in crime, and confirmed in wickedness, the

first complaint they utter, when accused of their iniquity, is uttered against those very parents who thus fondly, though foolishly, brought them up.

And whilst this shows powerfully the degeneracy of man's heart, does it not at the same time speak a useful lesson to all Christian parents? Wicked and ungenerous as it may be in children to lay blame to their parents for the sins they commit, yet it is to be feared, that to the carelessness or false indulgence of parents, may the origin of these sins be traced. "Train up a child in the way he should go," is the express direction of the Bible, and common sense and daily experience prove its truth and excellence. Childhood, like wax, receives impressions readily; and if care be taken that Christian-like impressions be grounded in the heart in early years; and if, moreover, the blessing of God be asked upon the work, there is little doubt but that children will grow up in the fear of God,

and become a blessing instead of a reproach to their parents.

Now let us conclude the mournful history of man's fall. "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."\*

What must have been the feelings of Eve, when the voice of the Almighty addressed her! One would have supposed, that, pierced with shame and sorrow, she would have sunk in speechless agony at the feet of her Creator. One would have supposed, that, touched with the gentleness of the rebuke implied in these mild words, "What is this that thou hast done?" she would have wept in bitter grief at having offended so kind, so gracious a Benefactor. But no: sin with its brazen hardihood had set up its reckless dominion in her heart; and without uttering one word of remorse,

\* Gen. iii. 13.



without offering one petition for mercy, she fearlessly excused herself by saying, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Alas! my brethren, how speedily did the fearful marks of sin succeed the fall of man! Satan had obtained a triumph in seducing God's creatures from His holy authority, and the successful tempter now began his reign in the hearts of his victims!

The time will not permit us to proceed further with this account in the present lecture. We will therefore reserve the history of God's dealings with this fallen pair, to a future discourse.

In the meanwhile, let us not pass over the awful subject we have been considering, without endeavouring to draw some practical conclusions for our souls' benefit.

We have seen man created in the pure image of God. We have seen him placed in a state of happiness. We have seen him walking in innocence, and enjoying

holy communion with his Maker. We have seen all these blessings showered upon him, and we have seen that obedience to one simple command was the only thing God required of him to ensure to him a continuance in this blissful state. But alas! the fearful subject of this lecture has shown us the sad reverse of all this. It has shown us that man fell from this glorious estate, and that in his fall every one of us, is involved.

We are all the children of fallen Adam, and we inherit from him the evil consequences of sin, namely, corruption of heart and alienation from the favour of God. By man's fall Satan gained a partial triumph; and we all well know that he still exercises great power over our minds. Against his evil dominion, then, must we constantly wrestle and strive, if we hope to regain the favour of God. But the Bible, as well as our own experience, teaches us, that all our efforts without the assistance of God can never avail

us. Let us then, my brethren, whilst we deplore the corruptions of original sin in our hearts, whilst we mourn over our depraved nature, let us fall on our knees, and humbly pray to God for His Holy Spirit to help us to subdue our evil propensities. Let us beseech Him to vouchsafe to us His aid, that we may be enabled to conquer this great enemy to our souls—an enemy who is ever seeking, through the secret workings of our evil passions, through our wilful indifference to religious concerns, and through our love of this world, to drag us into the same pit of misery with himself and his guilty companions.

Great, however, as Satan's triumph originally was—great as his power still is—yet God has sent forth a spiritual Captain, under whom we may fight and conquer this enemy to our souls. No sooner had man fallen through the devices of Satan, than God provided for him the means of shaking off Satan's

terrible dominion. No sooner was the curse delivered, "*Thou shalt surely die,*" than God provided a way of escape from the death eternal. It is true, we shall all surely die—that is, we shall all of us return to the dust from whence we were taken; but, my friends, we may each of us escape from that second death, which destroys both body and soul. God, in his great mercy, hath provided a way of deliverance from this just curse of disobedience; He has taken away the sting of death. Instead of exercising the whole power of his wrath; instead of visiting upon Adam and his descendants the extreme severity of his anger, He quickly relented. Like a tender parent, He became touched with soft compassion at our lost and miserable state. He purposed to rescue us from everlasting death. He promised that His only-beloved Son Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself once offered, should expiate the sins of the whole world. In due time, we all

know, this gracious messenger of love and mercy did descend with healing in His wings, into this valley of guilt and darkness; He left the bosom of His Father; He endured all the trials and miseries incident to human life; He consented to bear our sins in His own body on the tree, that all who believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. What infinite love and compassion is here displayed! and yet thousands remain untouched by it; nay thousands refuse to go, in unreserved faith and gratitude to Him, who has done all this for their salvation.

Need I remind you, my brethren, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life? Through no other way can we escape from the fearful consequences of Adam's fall. All other ways, however they may be sanctioned by worldly custom, however they may be gilded by pleasure, however they may be obscured by religious apathy, all other ways than



this lead to destruction. Satan stands at different paths, inviting us by specious pretences to go down them. The end of all these is wretchedness and eternal misery. The path of the Christian is straight and narrow ; but there is a guide ready and willing to help us forward, if we will apply to him for assistance.

And remember, my friends, it takes us but a few brief years to tread this difficult path, and that having passed it faithfully, we shall dwell, for millions of years, in bliss unspeakable. Whilst the other paths, into which Satan would betray us, are strewn with unholy pleasures and much present disquietude, the path to which our Saviour points is filled with comfort and hope. Whilst the path to which Satan beckons us, is ended by fiery wrath and destruction, the way into which our Lord would guide us, is terminated by heaven itself ! At the end of that narrow path stands our blessed Redeemer, clad in the bright robes of mercy and truth,

ready to plant a crown of glory upon the head of every faithful believer, as soon as his trembling footsteps shall reach the portals of heaven.

## LECTURE VI.

MY last lecture contained the history of man's fall, together with the answers of Adam and Eve, when the voice of the Almighty sought them out in their place of concealment. We now come to God's awful reply to their evasive confession.

“ And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”\*

God begins by addressing the serpent, because, through the specious form of

\* Gen. iii. 14.

that reptile, the devil was enabled to entice our parents into sin. The curse contained in the words we have just read refers to the fate of the serpent itself. It is most probable that before this transaction its form was lofty and erect. God, therefore, changed its stature and habits, in order to mark His displeasure against it, as the instrument employed by Satan in his guilty design. From that hour it became a loathsome reptile, base and grovelling in its propensities, and standing forth to future ages as a meet though unsightly emblem of the deformity of sin.

The following verse has a more deep and extended meaning. It contains both a prophecy and a promise, and is applied solely to Satan himself, who had assumed for the time being, the form of a serpent. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."\*

\* Gen. iii. 15.

In these remarkable words we find the first dawning of hope to Adam and Eve. In order, however, to understand the passage clearly, I must remind you, that the seed of the serpent means Satan and all his evil powers—whilst the seed of the woman refers to our blessed Redeemer, who, by the miraculous conception of the virgin Mary, was more peculiarly descended from the woman. Bearing this in mind, we may trace the full meaning of this gracious and wonderful prophecy.

God put enmity between these two contending parties. Satan and his angels were to exercise their malice in endeavouring to ruin the souls of mankind; but the Messiah, or seed of the woman, was to come, and obtain a victory over their malicious assaults. But not only was He to obtain a victory in his own glorious person, but He was to enable all his faithful followers, who fought manfully under his banner, to be conquerors also. Assaulted as we are inwardly by



the corruptions of our hearts, beguiled as we are outwardly by the ensnaring allurements of worldly pleasures and pursuits, yet, my friends, if we will take Christ for our captain, He will be our shield of defence; he will make us more than conquerors, and in the end will give unto us everlasting life.

That this spiritual warfare has been going on continually in the world, since the delivery of these remarkable words, there can be no doubt. The latent power of Satan has been working in men's hearts ever since, stirring them up to rebellion against God, and enticing, them by the deceitful blandishments of sin and passion, to become followers of him and forsakers of the Almighty. That his evil dominion prevails, is a truth equally certain. We need only consult the chronicles of past times—we need only look at the moral world as it is now constituted—we need only look into the secrets of our *own* hearts,—to be convinced, that the enmity

specified in this prophecy continues in great force up to the present hour. The devil goes about seeking whom he may devour ; he still assumes various disguises : although no longer permitted to take any visible form, to tempt us as he tempted our first parents, yet, he still exercises his invisible power over our hearts !

In the garb of pleasure he stretches forth the forbidden fruit to the gay and thoughtless ; in the seductive form of passion, he applies to the inbred corruption of the sensual ; in the fascination of present enjoyments, he appeals to the shortsighted and worldly. But there are still more specious ways in which Satan exercises his evil dominion over men's hearts. There are many persons, who, comparatively speaking, are proof against such open attacks, and yet vulnerable in other points. Satan perceives this, and like a skilful general, directs his forces accordingly. Flinging around him the cloak of false religion, he will assault the timid and

wavering, and either distract them with doubts and fears, or entice them into an assumption of false notions. Assuming the plausible form of reason, he will insinuate himself into the understandings of the free thinking, bending their minds captive to his will, and turning them from serving the true God. And still more commonly will he assume the specious character of a friendly adviser, and in the soft hollow accents of deceit, whisper peace to us, when there is no peace. In this latter mode of assault, he ruins the souls of thousands. All who are indifferent to vital religion—all who do not make the care of their immortal souls their first consideration — all such are, in different ways or in different degrees, under this particular exercise of Satan's dominion; they are sleeping on the brink of eternity—they are carrying on the dream of life, either with just enough sense of religion to quiet their fears, or with none at all. To these Satan continues to whisper "Peace, peace," and thus be-

guiled, they slumber on and on, anxious about their perishable bodies, careless about their imperishable souls, till the hard hand of death drags their bodies into the cold grave, and opens to their souls that awful abyss, now too late to be avoided ! In such ways as these, and in a thousand others, does Satan too often fatally prove and exercise his enmity to man. Against his power and all the wickedness of it, is opposed the pure spirit and holy authority of Christ's gospel. To procure pardon for sin, to lead us back to holiness of life, to purify our corrupt hearts, and to restore us to the divine image of God, are the professed objects of that gracious dispensation, the kind purposes for which Christ suffered and died. Where the end and the means of obtaining an end are thoroughly different, there must of necessity be a constant struggle between the two opposing powers. And thus is it with the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Now with respect to temporal wars (I mean wars carried on be-



tween man and man) are we not apt to inquire, and with some reason, into the goodness or badness of the cause of each contending army? And are we not guided by the goodness or badness of that cause, upon which to bestow our interest and wishes? Let us, my friends, pursue a similar inquiry into this spiritual warfare of which we are speaking, and we shall not only perceive that there must be enmity between the hidden powers of darkness and the revealed powers of light; but we shall see the excellence of the one and the iniquity of the other most forcibly displayed. Let us picture to ourselves the armies of Satan and the armies of Christ set in battle array one against the other, observe the outward features of each. Satan advances with the deadly weapons of revenge and malice. Fury and anger are stamped upon the faces of himself and the faces of his guilty followers. On his standard are enrolled the unhallowed emblems



of murders, thefts, and adulteries. With this banner in his hand he urges on his unholy forces, muttering his impious curses, and breathing destructive vengeance on the Christian host. Now turn your eyes in imagination upon the opposite army, drawn up under their Captain and Saviour Jesus Christ. No traces of anger and revenge are apparent there. The faces of this holy band bear the impress of peaceful serenity or earnest watchfulness. The white banner of the gospel floats in emblematic purity over their heads, whilst their divine Leader stands forth, not in the deformity of malice and revenge, but in all the loveliness of mercy and truth. That glorious Captain urges not his soldiers to *destroy*, but in the gentle accents of compassionate forbearance, commands them to *spare*. He instructs them not to lay down their weapons in idle forgetfulness of his cause or their own safety, but to hold them in constant readiness to repel rather than provoke the assaults of their enemies!

Thus may you perceive the very opposite spirits, in which these armies engage with each other. Nor is the end for which they contend less strikingly different. Whilst Satan strives to corrupt the heart of man, Christ seeks to purify it. Whilst Satan aims at alienating man from the favour of his God, Christ stands ever ready to restore him to his Almighty love. Whilst Satan lurks covertly around, deceiving men's hearts and drawing them by cunning devices into everlasting destruction, Christ goes forth in the brightness of his perfection, proclaiming salvation to a guilty world and seeking to win souls from eternal ruin, to share with him the glories of heaven. Herein then is shown the enmity between the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman.

Under this image of warfare has the contest between Satan and Christ's church been represented ever since it first commenced. All who hope for salvation are

deeply interested in its issue. Each of us who are here assembled must bear a part in this contest. Each of us must join one army or the other. Each of us must perish with the loser or triumph with the conqueror. It behoves each of us, then, to ask himself the question, whether he is fighting the good fight of Christian faith, or whether he is not enlisted under the banner of Satan. Viewing the two armies as I have just described them, viewing the glorious cause on the one hand, and the iniquitous one on the other, we are each of us ready to exclaim, "How can such a question be asked?" But in *practice* how is it with us? Is our decision there equally prompt? Have we renounced sin? Are we contending against its attacks? Have we gone to God's footstool to implore his aid to assist us in our Christian walk? Have we fled to that divine leader, Jesus Christ, to shield us from Satan's power? Do we fight manfully for his glorious cause? Do we never

desert from Christ's army, and flee to the seductive camp of Satan? Is religion with us our first care, or is it made subservient to the cares or pleasures of this short life? The conscience of each person must answer to himself these vital questions. To those to whom it replies favourably, I would speak in the animated language of the Psalmist: "Good luck have thou with thine honour; ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness and righteousness."\* To those whose consciences tell them that they are still halting between these two armies, or that they are still (through their love of this world) dwelling in the tents of Satan, to these I would exclaim, "Abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good."† Waste no more time in slothful ease. Enroll yourselves under the banners of Jesus Christ; fight the good fight of faith. Take up religion in earnest. Lay hold of the hope set before you in the

\* Psalm xlv. 5.

† Rom. xii. 9.



gospel. Thus shall you triumph in that great day when the last trumpet shall summon both armies—the army of Christ and the army of Satan—to the judgment-seat of God.

But in the latter clause of the verse, in which this prophetic intimation is given, there is also a *promise*. It is a promise, my friends, in which we are all deeply concerned. It is a promise, merciful in its tendency, and precious to the heart of every true believer. It is the promise of a Saviour. Scarcely had Adam and Eve fallen and become the slaves of Satan, than God mercifully promised a mode of salvation. The seed of the woman, which means Jesus Christ, was to bruise the serpent's head—that is, to shake the evil powers of his kingdom, and finally to crush him in everlasting ruin. But first the serpent was to bruise his heel. And has not such been the case, both with respect to the Saviour and his followers? Behold the Son of God led as a lamb to



the slaughter—behold his agonizing struggle in the garden of Gethsemane—behold Him enduring the insulting taunts of wicked men, and finally, behold him expiring in lingering tortures upon the cross, and then say, has not Satan indeed bruised his heel? And again with respect to his followers : how many have suffered cruel deaths in their opposition to Satan's dominion, how many are still struggling against his artful attacks—how many are still mourning over his tormenting controul over their hearts—and alas ! my brethren, how many thousands have been beguiled, and are still permitting themselves to be beguiled, by him, from the good Shepherd, and, through his temptations, have been for ever shut from the fold of God's sheep !

The promise contained in these words was not fulfilled for above four thousand years after it was given ; although the benefits of it were secured to Adam and his descendants upon their repentance and faith. When in due course of time the

seed of the woman, that is, the Messiah, appeared upon earth, then was the head of the serpent indeed bruised! Our Saviour's holy life—his undaunted virtue—his powerful miracles—his generous sacrifice and his glorious resurrection, all conspired to shake the strength of Satan's kingdom to its very foundation. The holy Apostles and martyrs have since secured fresh victories, and every faithful minister of the gospel, together with every devout private Christian, be his lot in life ever so humble, still unite in weakening and destroying his power! And so will it continue, till the end of the world. Then will the eternal Son of God crush for ever the head of this great enemy of our souls, and consign him, and all who have blindly become his slaves, to that place of wrath prepared for the "devil and his angels."

Such is the meaning of this remarkable prophecy and promise. In its delivery at the moment of man's fall, we may trace

the tender mercy of God. His gracious object was salvation to man; and lest by the hopeless state into which disobedience had plunged him, he might grow desperately hardened, the God of love and mercy lost no time in revealing to man a gleam of hope. The promise that the seed of the woman should finally triumph, was a glad light which beamed upon Adam's soul, and chased away the darkness of despair.

We proceed now to read the sentence God passed upon Eve. He addresses her first, because she was first led into sin, and had also assisted Satan in beguiling her husband. "Unto the woman he said; I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband; and he shall rule over thee."\*

That this sentence was and still is carried into execution, we all know. In a

\* Gen. iii. 16.

moral view of this passage, we may perceive how God at once punished the ambitious Eve and checked her undue influence over her husband. He decreed that from thenceforward she should become subservient to his power. And here I may observe that when this is attempted to be altered, it is always sure to lead the way to much domestic discomfort. The line was drawn by God himself. It may be preserved without degradation to either party. Whilst the wife is helpless she naturally clings for support to her husband, and thus is established between them an interchange of kind offices, which serves at once to heighten and perpetuate affection.

“ And unto Adam God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it ; cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and



thistles shall it bring forth to thee : and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” \*

In these words we find that the very plea by which Adam tried to excuse himself, was urged by God as a reason for his punishment, “ Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife.” And does not this teach us a useful lesson in our daily intercourse with the world ? Are we not apt to be more guided by man’s opinion, than God’s declarations ?

More especially with respect to those we love, do we not often pay more attention to what they advance, than what the Bible or our own consciences tell us is right ? This may be what is called an “ amiable weakness,” but be assured, my friends, it is a weakness which is danger-

\* Gen. iii. 17—19.



ous, and one against which we ought to guard. Do not imagine that in saying this, I wish to recommend a wayward departure from the examples and sentiments of those to whom we are bound by the tender ties of relationship. On the contrary, where the examples and sentiments of such are founded upon a true religious basis, they afford infinite help and comfort to us who are treading the same path. What I am anxious to enforce is this, that in our deference to the opinions and influence of any of our fellow-creatures, we must not overlook the grand test to which every action will be brought. We may fairly admire this or that quality—we may love and esteem such and such a person for the possession of some amiable trait ; but after all, it is to the Bible—"the unerring word of God"—that we must apply for rules of action, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in true righteousness. That pure source of light must be our guiding

star to heaven. If we depend too much upon erring mortals for example, it is greatly to be feared that we shall soon imitate their weaknesses as well as their better qualities. In short, in a point of such vital importance as the salvation of our souls, we must not refer to the opinions of *men*, but to the express laws and revelation of God.

In worldly matters it is fair to avail ourselves of the experience and good sense of our fellow creatures, but in the concern of our immortal souls, we must apply to a far more pure and lofty source. As St. Paul (before his conversion) sat at the feet of Gamaliel to be taught by him, in all rules of Jewish divinity, so must we cast ourselves at the feet of our divine teacher and Saviour Jesus Christ, to be taught by him in all the excellencies of Christian holiness. Of him must we learn; for He alone is the way, and the truth, and the life. He alone can both instruct and assist us. He alone can both teach the way and impart the blessing of

salvation. His power to do both is open to every one who will flee to Him for succour, and "his love is such that whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out."\* If then we find man setting up any doctrine contrary to his divine teaching, let us, however that person may be united to us by social ties—however he may be serviceable to us in respect to wordly interests, let us not hesitate which to follow. To have hearkened to the voice of man rather than the words of God, will afford us no plea of excuse, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. It may perhaps, as in the case of Adam, be the cause of our condemnation. Let us then be careful in this particular ; and without being uncharitable in our opinions of others—without being suspicious of their motives or closing our eyes from their good example and general advice, let us never lose sight of that divine teacher, who can alone instruct us in our pursuit after salvation.

\* John vi. 37.

We now return to the sentence pronounced upon Adam. In its tone the mercy and forbearance of God are strikingly apparent: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." We here find God denouncing wrath not upon Adam himself, but upon the ground for his sake. In his happy days of innocence Adam ate of all the delicious fruits of Eden. Without toilsome labour on his part, they sprung up and afforded him a constant supply of food and nourishment. No longer, however, was this blissful state of existence to continue. It was to be exchanged for a state of labour and hardship. "In the sweat of his brow" was he henceforth to provide for his sustenance.

This sentence may seem at first sight to be harsh and severe, but a little reflection will convince us, that as Adam was now circumstanced there was in it a tender over-ruling Providence. Adam had forfeited immortality, and was only to regain it by a strict obedience to God

through the remainder of his days on earth. His present life therefore was no longer of any value to him, than as it enabled him to escape from that eternal death to which his disobedience had subjected him. Was there then not mercy in God's scattering thorns and briars in his path, in order that he might be reminded that this life, with its perishable enjoyments, was but a trifling consideration, when compared with the never-ending joys of eternity? Was it not like a tender father correcting his child for his future good? Did it not forcibly say to Adam, (and does it not say the same to every one of us,) "Make not this world your abiding place, but look forward to a better country, even a heavenly?" Yes, my friends, however grievous the sentence may at first appear, however much we may suffer from it in this present life, there is no doubt, but, if we view it with a reference to another and a better world, God, in its delivery, consulted the ultimate happiness of man.



There is, however, one point of God's sentence which demands our serious attention. It is a point upon which we must all reflect with infinite interest. It is an awful point. It is that point in God's sentence which finally consigns every individual being to the grave. "Dust thou art, and unto "dust shalt thou return." It is in vain to deny, that in this infliction there is not pain or grief. The love of life is one of the strongest feelings implanted in the human heart. We all of us more or less cling to it tenaciously by nature. Whether tortured by sickness or saddened by grief, there is still in the natural heart of man, a yearning after life. The love of existence expires only with life itself—a sure proof of its strong hold upon our minds!

Viewing death, then, in a natural point of view, it may truly be called the king of terrors, the scourge of our nature. There is every thing in it to render it humiliating, depressing, and awful. It is humiliating,

for death destroys all personal pride and vanity. It regards neither rank nor riches. It breaks the delusive dream of arrogant pretension. It exposes the littleness of worldly distinction. It brings down the boasting of the strong and the vaunting activity of the vigorous. The moment the hand of death has touched its victims, they are reduced to one common level, "the dust of the ground."

It is depressing: for death spares neither age nor social ties; it snatches the dearest friends from our circle; it abruptly severs the tenderest of earthly ties, and it hurries us from the fair freshness of this gladsome earth, and consigns us to the cold stillness of the tomb.

It is also awful: death sets the seal upon our future doom; the moment we die, every chance of working out our salvation is over; as death has found us, so shall each of us rise to judgment. This is indeed an awful thought! and when we further think how uncertain life is, and

how many are cut off without a moment's preparation, does it not speak to all of us a most powerful, a most solemn warning?

But let us view death as Christians, and its features will be materially altered. Is it so humiliating to exchange personal beauty for the form of angels? Is it humiliating to exchange worldly rank, for the glorious title of the children of God? Is it humiliating to exchange earthly riches for heavenly treasures? And lastly, is it humiliating to exchange the inequality of worldly distinction, for the blessed privilege of becoming one large united family under one heavenly Father, the Lord God Almighty.

Again : is it so depressing to part with dear friends on earth, when we are assured that we may rejoin them hereafter? Is it so depressing to consign them, or be consigned ourselves, to the grave, when we know that it is the appointed way to heaven?

Death viewed with a Christian's eye is

no longer to be regarded as the scourge of our nature, but as the means of translating us into a better world : “ As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” This consoling truth is so beautifully, so forcibly set forth in the 15th chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians, that I will read to you its concluding verses, wherein it is shown, how death is shorn of its terrors, by the merciful dispensation of Christ’s gospel.

“ As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery ; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption,

and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O! death, where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Herein then is shown the necessity of death, and also that to Christians "to die" is gain." Let us then, my friends "so number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Every one of us assembled within these walls must sooner or later crumble into the dust from whence we are taken; death is the stepping stone to eternity: let each of us strive and pray that it may be to us the stepping stone to an eternity of happiness.

It now only rests for me to read the conclusion of this history.

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all



living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.”\*

Thus, through a succession of power and mercy on the part of God, and folly and crime on the part of man, have we arrived at this point of that interesting history, which has occupied our attention in this course of lectures. It is indeed a mournful end, for so glorious, so gracious a beginning! It is impossible to imagine a more truly heart-rending scene than the

\* Gen. iii. 20—24.

departure of Adam and Eve from the peaceful shades of lovely Eden. Without, however, dwelling upon the bitterness of their grief, the misery of their situation, let us think how much more grievous will it be for us, should we be finally shut out from Paradise, when its gates shall be again thrown open for the entrance of all true believers.

Are we, then, so passing our time here are we so preparing ourselves for eternity, as to afford us a "good hope" of entering that blessed abode? Is our preparation for eternity going on as the bible recommends? Is it going on at all? or are we toiling, or fretting, or rejoicing over worldly interests, and yet dead to the great call of religion? These are not trifling considerations. We may delude our minds for a few short years; we may lull the voice of conscience; we may stifle half-formed convictions; we may turn resolutely from the great concern of our souls; we may fancy ourselves wise, or great,

or good, according to our different circumstances—but this dream must end. We have each of us an awful trial to undergo at the judgment-seat of God ; no greatness, or cleverness, or riches, can rescue us from that trial. We are placed in this world to prepare ourselves for it : so long as we continue in this world, the offers of salvation are open freely to all ; the moment we depart out of it, they are for ever closed. There is not a person here present, I sincerely believe, who *knows not* the appointed means of salvation. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Faith in the merits of his atoning sacrifice, and holiness of life, are the simple conditions upon which we may secure eternal life ; let us then lay these great truths seriously to our hearts, and moreover, let us act upon them : let us not fancy it a point in which we are not each of us personally interested ; let us not leave these walls with the vague unmeaning confession, that all that has

been urged by the preacher is vastly good ; let us not retire to our homes, or our closets, and fancy that because we admit this, and have listened to what has been enforced, that we have done all that is necessary. No, my friends, if we hope to enter Paradise, we must make such hopes the mainspring of our actions. We must not fold our arms in ease and indifference, and vaguely trust that all will end well. This is not the road that will lead us to heaven ; it is one of those false paths which will lead us in an opposite direction.

The gates of Paradise, which were shut upon Adam and Eve, will remain closed until the great day of judgment. They will then be thrown open to every faithful believer. The whole world will be assembled in one countless multitude before the searching presence of God. It is a scene in which each of us, must bear a part ; each of us, on that awful day, will be admitted into Paradise or excluded from it for ever : let us then not be luke-

warm in a matter so very momentous ; let us not waste this life in spiritual sloth—but let us, in earnest, embrace the rich offers of salvation freely offered to every one of us through Jesus Christ. Then, when the gates of Eden are again flung open, no longer will the flaming sword of God's wrath oppose our entrance, but the *golden sceptre* of Christ will be reared in its stead. No longer will the cherubims forbid our approach or check our anxious advance, but Christ himself will stand forth in all the loveliness of reconciled mercy, welcoming and inviting all his faithful followers to share with him the glories of his Father's kingdom.

THE END.

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